

VOLUME 8
NUMBER 10

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES

WITCH OF BLACKFEN MOOR BY LEE FRANCIS

fantastic ADVENTURES

DECEMBER
25¢



SPAWN OF THE GLACIER

by LEROY YERXA

DECEMBER
1964



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BE AT YOUR BEST

THESE are simple obligations, to our country, to our men at the front, and to ourselves.

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Address.....
City..... State..... **4FR**



STORIES

WITCH OF BLACKFEN MOOR (Novelet)	by Lee Francis.....	10
The devil's daughter herself led these evil beings out of the forgotten wastes of Blackfen Moor.		
FREDDIE FUNK'S SEVEN LEAGUE BOOTS (Novelet)	by Leroy Yerxa.....	46
It takes a lot of steps to complete a twenty-one mile hike. Freddie could do it in three!		
THE WOODEN HAM (Short)	by Morris J. Steele....	62
The Germans had no taste for wooden ham. Nor did the Dutch—until they fed a stranger!		
PEARL-HANDLED POISON (Short)	by Richard Casey.....	68
"You probably need this gun more than I do," Mike told his brother. But Mike was mistaken...		
PROFESSOR CYCLONE (Novelet)	by Alexander Blade....	72
How was Professor Walden able to foretell when and where these cyclones would strike?		
JONES BUYS WAR BLONDES (Short)	by Elroy Arno.....	98
Need a thousand blondes? See Professor Quinby. He will guarantee results—and how!		
YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN (Short)	by G. H. Irwin.....	112
Truth, they say, is a weapon. But in the hands of Bill Reese, it proved double-edged!		
HEROES DIE HARD (Short)	by Henry Gade.....	128
The Wallace rescued Wells when he lost his ship. Yet the Wallace had been sunk a month before...		
CLOAK OF SATAN (Novelet)	by Frank Patton.....	136
What eerie secret haunted the girl known as Madame Satan? Because he loved her, Bronson had to know.		
SPAWN OF THE GLACIER (Short Novel)	by Leroy Yerxa.....	152
A race of tiny men came from the glacier's heart—their purpose, they said, was to conquer the world!		

FEATURES

The Editor's Notebook	8	The Spider's Prophecy	134
Diesel Science	61	Fantastic Sea Journey	135
Vignettes of Famous Scientists	67	Scientific Riddles	192
Fantastic—but True	110	All But Flying Elephants	194
Romance of the Elements	126	Reader's Page	195
Warriors of Other Worlds		208	

Front cover painting by Robert Gibson Jones, illustrating a scene from "Spawn of the Glacier." Back cover painting by Malcolm Smith, depicting the "Warrior of Mercury." Illustrations by Julian S. Krupa; Virgil Finlay; Hadden; Arnold; Malcolm Smith; H. W. McCauley; Arnold Kohn; Rod Ruth.

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DECEMBER
1943

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VOLUME 5
NUMBER 10

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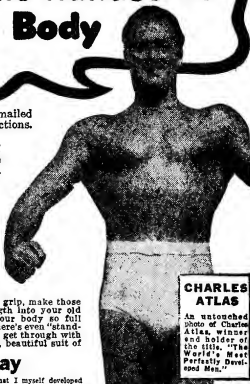
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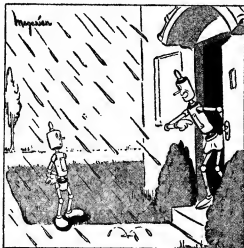
The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

AT FIRST glance you might suppose this was a very ordinary issue: the front cover is by Jones and the back cover is by Smith. A guy by the name of Browne is one of the editors. But don't let that steer you astray! This is *not* an ordinary issue! Take another glance—this time at the contents page—and you'll see why.

WE ALL like witch stories, and this issue gives us two. One by Lee Francis, and the other by Frank Patton. But before we say anything about the stories, we'll mention a rather odd circumstance concerning "Witch Of Blackfen Moor" (Lee Francis' story). It seems that we gave Francis a very lovely Finlay illustration as the basis for his inspiration on the story. Well, when we came to the problem of where to put the title of the story, we remembered a request you readers made about not lettering across a good illustration (especially a Finlay). So we ran the Finlay in the body of the story, and had Julian S. Krupa do a lead illustration. Of course, nothing could be more different than the styles of these two artists, but we say no story has ever been illustrated by two such popular artists!

BY THE way, we have a dozen illustrations on hand by Finlay, which we'll give you sparingly, because Mr. Finlay is now in the armed



"Junior, get in out of the rain before you rust!"

forces, and doing no more work. We had him do some for us in advance, and now we are proud to be able to give you his work while he is away.

TO GET back to the stories, we want you to compare the two witch stories. You will be amazed with the difference between the two. This in spite of the similarity of subject. Ordinarily we don't run two stories on the same subject in the same issue. But in this instance, by sheer comparison, it was the only thing we could do. They set each other off like a snowball on black velvet. We won't say which is the snowball!

MORRIS J. STEELE (now in the armed forces—and further, overseas!) sends us (through hell and water, he says) a short-short story for this issue. It's "The Wooden Ham" and, says Steele, this is no fiction, but fact, as fantastic as it seems—and by that he means the ham, not the fantasy climax he placed on the yarn. Actually, we can vouch for it, because the other day we got a news release which confirms the fact that the Dutch do place these wooden hams in the shop windows—and not because they want to!

TWO more short-shorts in this issue are Richard Casey's (making his bow in *Fantastic Adventures*) "Pearl-Handled Poison"; and Henry Gade's "Heroes Die Hard." We hope you like them. They're just the thing to read on the bus on the way to that war job.

NEWS has just come to us, as we write these words, that Italy has surrendered unconditionally. Didn't we tell you this was an extraordinary issue!

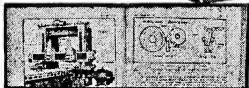
REMEMBER Freddie Funk? Well, Leroy Yerxa (who clicks twice in this issue) brings him back again in "Freddie Funk's Seven League Boots." This is the first of several new stories based on this humorous character.

YERXA'S other story is "Spawn Of The Glacier", which, in spite of its position at the bottom of the contents page, is the story featured by Jones' painting on the front cover. The reason for the story being last is complicated. It

(Continued on page 44)

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Witch of BLACKFEN MOOR

By
**LEE
FRANCIS**

**Because an angry woman made a
pact with the Devil, horror came to
Blackfen Moor twenty years later!**

WALTER BREWSTER whirled around suddenly. His stern, gray eyes bored into those of his wife.

"Gratitude be damned," he said in a harsh voice. "It isn't *that* I've asked for. I've wanted your admiration and love. I've had no pleasure in your companionship since we were married. You'd make a fine mate for the Devil."

Pamela Brewster dropped the riding crop with an angry little motion and stiffened with rage. They were separated by the long length of deep carpet that covered the floor of the library. Pamela Brewster's eyes were narrowed with hate. Her slim, vibrant body contrasted strangely with that of the dumpy, middle-aged man. She had a touch of life about her that made men stare at her with quick interest. She was content only when others followed her about with adoration and her hus-

band lost himself in other interests.

Her shoulders jerked as she walked swiftly across the room to him and stared defiantly up into his face.

"Marriage with Satan might have its good points," she said in a low voice. "At least life in hell would be more exciting than the year I am about to face."

Walter Brewster looked bewildered. "What *are* you talking about?"

He stepped close to her but she backed away as though hating the thought of having him near her.

"You're a fool," she said coldly. "Why do you think I've stolen every hour that I possibly could away from this prison of yours? Why have I been riding away into the moor every morning, and staying away from you until I'm exhausted and starved. Yes, Walter, after all these years you've managed to trick me into supplying an heir



She was like a slender lovely goddess—but she belonged in Hell!

for the Brewster millions. You can sit snugly in your library and gloat over the future while I become more miserable than I have ever been, living with you."

Her husband slumped down wearily in the great leather chair where he had so recently awaited her home-coming. Every word that she spoke, every gesture of her angry body, cut like a white hot barb.

"I'm—I'm sorry," he managed to mutter. "I didn't know . . ."

She stamped her foot angrily.

"Of course you didn't know, you blundering idiot. You haven't known anything about me since we married. You've locked me away up here on Blackfen Moor and expected me to wait dutifully for your every whim. But I haven't waited, have I, Walter?"

Her eyes became cunning. Walter Brewster sprang to his feet. His fists were clenched and the blue veins of his forehead stood out cruelly in the dim light.

"Shut up," he said hoarsely. "I've had all I can stand. Get out!"

The woman leaned closer to him, a taunting smile on her lips.

"You're going to have that child you wanted so badly, Walter. I swore that you never would, but I was wrong. *Perhaps, Walter, you would like your child to be an offspring of Satan?*"

WALTER BREWSTER, beside himself with rage, reached out with twisting fingers, but she evaded them and stood panting a few feet away.

"That would be murder," she said. "As much as you hate me, you could never kill me."

Brewster stood very still, his head bent forward, arms hanging limply at his side.

"I'm—I'm sorry," he said contritely.

"Pam, what have I ever done to make you turn against me? I told you Brewster Hall would be lonely. Since you first came, I've tried to be a companion."

"Yes, you've tried, Walter." Her voice rose to a hysterical sob. "You—a man twenty years my senior—have tried to understand the mind and emotions of a girl who craves freedom and a good time. You've succeeded only in making yourself a father to me. I haven't been the simple, knitting kind of female you expected and you've tried to control me by shouting and threatening me when I break away from the Brewster tomb and look for amusement."

"But now," he pleaded. "Surely things can be different. We'll have . . ."

"Yes. The child. But don't be too sure that we will, Walter. Perhaps I'll die and leave it alone with you. You'll like that, won't you?"

He took another hesitant step toward her, misery etched on his face.

"Pam, please!"

She backed away swiftly, reaching for the riding crop.

"Stay away from me." The crop went high in the air. "I hate you, Walter Brewster. I'm moving to the west wing tonight and I'm taking Margaret with me. She's the only servant I'll need. Don't try to follow me into the moor because I can outride you. After a while I'll leave the Hall no more. You'll be happy then, when I am chained to my room and cannot escape you."

"The child?" he asked quietly. "You won't harm it?"

A wild laugh escaped Pamela Brewster's lips.

"Not for the world!" She seemed on the verge of breaking under the strain of the quarrel. "Remember, Walter, I am a consort of the devil.

You said that yourself, and I hope that our offspring will be proud to carry its father's name."

She turned and left him alone. Logs in the vast fireplace at the far end of the library crackled loudly and he listened to them, and the firm, angry tread of her riding boots as they crossed the marble floor of the great hall and faded toward the servant's quarters.

At least she had chosen Margaret Jenson, the family nurse, for her companion. Margaret's fat legs had traveled the vastness of Brewster Hall since Walter himself was a child. No harm would come to the mother or child as long as Margaret's white-haired, patient head could remain in charge.

WALTER BREWSTER picked up his pipe, lighted it carefully and then put it down once more on the tobacco stand. He wandered toward the tall French windows and stared out upon Blackfen Moor.

He had to admit, as he watched the sun sink over the foggy, brush-covered marsh, that Brewster Hall wasn't the place for a girl who was accustomed to having London society at her beck and call.

The Brewster tradition had been born on Blackfen Moor and the spirit of the rugged English countryside was in his blood. Perhaps he had been selfish to bring Pam here.

Brewster's thoughts changed abruptly as he saw the heavy storm clouds scudding in low from the sea. There would be a storm tonight, and heavy winds that would bring the moor alive with the ghostly movements of wild things. Brewster found his jacket, picked up the pipe and clamped it tightly in his teeth, and crossed the court and struck off toward Langley Crossroads.

If Pam were to have a child, Doc

Quantry would have to know. Pam's hatred, Walter Brewster could not fight. That she get the finest care was of uppermost importance in his mind. The cold wind, wet with spray from the sea, made him feel better. Pam's wild foreboding seemed less real out here on the moor.

He shook his head impatiently, remembering her words:

"I am a consort of the Devil. Remember, Walter, you said that yourself."

CHAPTER II

Child of Sin

THE night was bitter, even for Blackfen Moor. Doctor Thaddius Quantry wrapped his muffler tightly around his neck and drew his great coat close to his chin. In the hall of the small cottage he picked up his bag and stepped out on the porch. Langley Crossroads was asleep. He pulled out his stem-winder watch. Midnight. Walter Brewster had called shortly before twelve. The call was urgent. The long awaited heir to the Brewster estate was on its way.

Doctor Quantry looked toward the laboratory behind the house. A light was burning over the bench inside. Quantry smiled. His young assistant, Philip Brown, was still hard at work on the typhoid germs. Upstairs, Quantry's daughter Phyllis slept soundly, unaware of her father's hurried exit. Langley Crossroads, its small, thatched cottages in darkness, waited for day to awaken it. Quantry climbed stiffly into the carriage, touched his horse with the whip and they were away.

The beast kept up a sharp canter all the way to the crossroads that branched away from the London road toward Blackfen Moor. Then the carriage slowed and the doctor was forced to

prod the horse continually to keep him on the move.

Animals feared and hated Blackfen Moor, he thought. Perhaps humans, excluding doctors of course, would be wiser to stay away from the Moor at night. It, like the rest of England's fairy infested country, had a full share of werewolves and gnome people.

Quantry chuckled. Doctors, with their hard-headed, scientific explanations, were the first to admit healthy superstition. To themselves, at least. Blackfen Moor held no terror for him, yet he freely admitted that he had, during his twenty years on its broad acres, seen things that made him hunch a bit lower in the carriage and apply the whip with added fervor.

Brewster Hall loomed in the darkness ahead. Its high, rock walls looked more like a prison than a home. The Brewster name went back to centuries long forgotten. Modern plumbing and electric lights stuck out amidst the medieval surroundings like small warts of modernism, unwelcome but necessary to the process of living in the twentieth century.

Thaddius Quantry admitted, as he saw the light burning in the west wing, that he must thank God electricity had come to dispell some of the gloom that hung over Blackfen Moor.

Quantry tethered the horse quickly and mounted the stone steps to the great hall. Roberts, the butler, opened the door. Roberts, like Margaret Jenson the nurse, had been with Walter Brewster from the first.

"Good evening to you," Quantry said. "The Missus? Is she holding up?"

Roberts, his stiff figure and calm, pleasant face always ready for any situation, smiled slightly.

"She's not receiving guests, tonight, sir. But, in your case—"

QUANTRY chuckled, gave the butler his coat, and went swiftly across the hall. He met Walter Brewster at the winding staircase. Brewster looked bad. Almost a year had passed since he had talked with his wife. During that time his only knowledge of her was gained through Quantry who made regular visits to the west wing.

"Good evening, Walter," Quantry said. "You'd better take a sedative and sleep a while. Remember that heart of yours . . ."

Brewster waved an impatient arm.

"Thadd," he begged, "make sure she's all right. If anything happens . . ."

Thaddius Quantry grunted.

"You've been too damned good to her all along," he said impatiently. "The woman's a shrew if ever there was one. I'm a mild-mannered man, but at times that wife of yours tries me sorely."

Brewster sighed.

"I know," he admitted. "This has been pretty hard on her, though. After it's over, if she'll listen to me, I'll suggest a trip to London."

Thaddius Quantry was part way up the stairs. He stopped and turned around, a pitying smile on his lips.

"Walter," he said. "I've been family doctor to the Brewsters for a long time. You've done everything possible to make Pam at home here. She's—if you'll pardon me for saying it—a bit out of place on Blackfen Moor. She should be free to run wild in London. Only remember this, once you send her there, she's lost to you forever."

"If that's the way she wants it," Brewster said heavily. "It will have to be."

The doctor went upstairs quickly, turned down the long, drapery-hung hall toward the west wing and disappeared into the gloom.

WAITING patiently as he was destined to do for several hours, Walter Brewster started as he heard a high-pitched scream of fear from the suite of rooms Pamela Brewster had chosen. Cold sweat stood out on his forehead and he turned and went haltingly into the library.

Several times in the early morning he heard that same cry again. Each time it rose in pitch and sank to a groan of agony. Unselfishly, he blamed her suffering on himself. Once, Margaret Jensen came in hurriedly. He jumped from his chair, only to find that she brought a message that all was well.

Toward noon the cries lessened and the house was silent. Doctor Thaddius Quantry came slowly down the stairs to the great hall.

Brewster, his features pale as the marble floor under his feet, waited at the door. Quantry had a frightened, animal look about him. He had lost all the calmness of a country doctor. He took his coat mechanically as though trying to evade Brewster's eyes.

"The . . . baby?" Brewster asked. "Pam? They both are all right?"

Quantry faced him squarely.

"Dead!" he said in a quivering voice. It was not like Quantry to lose control of his emotions.

Brewster's lips tightened.

"Not . . . not both of them?"

Quantry launched into a hurried, somewhat garbled explanation.

"Your wife refused to live," he said. "She fought me off when I should have been able to help. She wanted to die. I tried to help her when the suffering was worse. She refused my help."

"But the child," Brewster begged. "Surely you could have saved it?"

Quantry drew the scarf tightly around his face. Only his eyes, cold with fear, were visible above it.

"Walter," he asked gently, "did Pam

ever show interest in witchcraft or sorcery?"

Brewster's fists clenched tightly at his side but his answer was calm and low-spoken.

"No. You have a reason for asking?"

Quantry seemed at loss for a reply. He took his bag from the butler. His eyes were nervous, darting about the great hall.

"No reason," he said abruptly. "I'm sorry, Walter, believe me I am. I will sign the death certificates when I return home."

They faced each other, old friends torn apart by sudden mistrust of each other. At last Walter Brewster found words.

"I am free to go to them now?" he asked.

Quantry shook his head, shooting a meaning glance over Brewster's head at Roberts, the butler.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I think it best that you do not see them now. It will be better to remember Pam as you knew her before."

"But, my God, you can't keep me away from my own wife."

"I think she did a fine job of that herself," Quantry said harshly. "Now, for heaven's sake, get some rest before I have to sign a death certificate for you as well. It can do you no harm to stay away from the dead. It may be fatal if you go to them."

He turned quickly and went out into the night. Pronouncing the woman dead was a blessing! To say that Walter Brewster's child had died in birth was a lie. Nurse Jensen would keep her secret and Walter Brewster would be safer without the knowledge of what had happened.

Doctor Thaddius Quantry shuddered as he climbed wearily into the carriage.

CHAPTER III

Fortune for the Child

"I TELL you, Thadd, I know you're lying." Walter Brewster leaned forward in his chair, his face red with excitement.

"That night after you left, I couldn't find Nurse Jenson. After she came back from the moor I tried to question her, but she was too frightened to talk."

Doctor Quantry tried to remain calm. Brewster had come to Langley Crossroad soon after dinner, and for the past two hours he had steadily questioned Quantry to no avail.

Twenty years had passed since that night at Brewster Hall—twenty years that changed both men; but the greatest change was in Walter Brewster. He had grown so wealthy that the influence of his money was felt far beyond Langley Crossroads. The Brewster millions had become a powerful part of financial London and every such undertaking that took place there.

Both men knew that Brewster's days were numbered. Perhaps this fact, more than any other, made them equally stubborn tonight.

Quantry placed the half-emptied glass of wine on the table. He shook his head sadly.

"It's no use, Walter," he said. "If you're trying to make me say your daughter is alive, I can't say it. I signed death certificates for both of them and you yourself saw them buried at the Rightwood plot."

Brewster picked up his glass, drained the contents hurriedly and put it down again. The force of his arm splintered the empty glass in a dozen pieces but he seemed not to notice.

"I saw two caskets put into the ground," he said.

Thaddius Quantry's expression didn't change, but his mind was in a turmoil. He had never thought this night would come. Brewster had been satisfied for so long that this new turn had come entirely as a surprise.

"Why are you so anxious to find this—this daughter of yours?" he asked.

Brewster sprang to his feet.

"Then you admit that she's alive?"

"I admit nothing of the sort," Quantry objected angrily. "The child was born dead. I'm too old a friend of yours to . . ."

"Rubbish!" Brewster grinned suddenly, a knowing, unpleasant grin. "You say she was born dead, do you? Then explain to me why I heard a child cry out after you left the house. Why the nurse left soon afterward, carrying a basket, and came home close to midnight without it. *Why didn't you want me to see my baby and my wife after they died?*"

Quantry's forehead was moist. His hands were clamped tightly to the arms of his chair.

"I am the only living person who knows what happened that night," he said stubbornly. "The nurse died five years ago. So far as I am concerned anything she did or said had nothing to do with your child. I saw it buried myself."

BREWSTER walked toward him towering over the old doctor.

"That casket was exhumed last week," he said in an icy voice. "There was no body in it. The box had been filled with earth."

Quantry started forward. He moistened his lips.

"Why are you so anxious to have your baby back now?" he asked quietly. "For twenty years the case has been closed. Surely you can't expect . . ."

Brewster's hand descended on his shoulder. The big man's voice was quiet, subdued once more.

"Because I realize now that I owe everything to the baby," he said. "I suppose you and Nurse Jenson thought I would abuse it because it belonged to Pam. I'm an old man, Quantry, and the boy, or girl—only you know which—would be almost of age. It could have a fortune when I die. I'm the last of the family and I want a chance to do a justice which I fully believe is due."

Thaddius Quantry stood up slowly. He walked to the window and stared out across the moor.

"If I told you the baby was alive and that Nurse Jenson took it away that night, what would you think of me?"

Brewster started forward eagerly.

"I'd think you were an ungrateful old busybody but if you did all this for my sake, I couldn't find myself being angry with you."

Quantry wheeled around.

"I cannot tell you why I did it," he said in a tired voice. "I will tell you that it wasn't for the reason you thought. I hope to God you never find Frances . . ."

"Frances?" Brewster placed a big hand on Quantry's arm. "Then it was a girl?"

Quantry nodded.

"Your wife named her before she died. Then she asked that the girl be taken away where you would never see her."

"But, my God, Thadd," Brewster started.

Quantry interrupted.

"I started to say I hope you never find the girl. The nurse took her to a poor family deep in the moor. What happened to her I don't know."

"I'll find her," Brewster said. "I'll

find her if I have to search every town in England. And Thadd, when I do, I'll bring her here and you'll apologize to her on your knees for any harm you've caused her."

Quantry turned away from him, looking toward the dim, misty world of Blackfen Moor. A shudder passed through his thin body.

"For your own sake, Walter," he said in a hushed voice. "I hope you never do. If I'm wrong, and you love her as much as you think you can, then come to me with the girl and I'll try to make amends for what I did."

Brewster was putting his coat on hurriedly. He went to the door, paused and said in a more friendly voice.

"Don't worry, Thadd. As much as I'd like to wring your scrawny neck this minute, I think you did what you thought was best. I can't condemn you for that."

He went out, slamming the door behind him. Quantry stood as though in a trance. He heard Brewster's car start outside and listened to the sound of the motor as it faded into the moor. He turned, shook his head quickly as though to dispel a bad dream and went toward the wine bottle on the table. Pouring a full glass, he drank it down in a few gulps and sank into the chair.

"*If You have the wisdom and the kindness for which men give You credit,*" he said in a low voice, "*In the name of Your Father, don't let Walter Brewster find that child.*"

CHAPTER IV

Beginning of Fear

THE trip to Brewster Hall was a long one. Roberts, always the perfect butler, drove as he acted, in a slow, sedate manner. Blackfen Moor had a foggy depressing night in store for the few visitors who must cross it.

In spite of the fog, the rutted road and the rain that would surely come before they could reach home, Walter Brewster felt a great weight lifted from his shoulders. He tried to analyze the feeling he had for Frances Brewster . . .

"Damn! What was that?"

The car jerked suddenly to one side, hit the soft mud at the edge of the road and Roberts managed to swerve it back into the ruts.

"Be more careful," Brewster managed. "We've plenty of time. Don't wreck the car."

Roberts mumbled a low apology and kept on the road. He was driving faster now. The butler seemed ill at ease, his head turning from time to time as he stared across the moor. Brewster found himself watching Roberts with nervous eyes.

"Did something startle you?" he asked in a more kindly tone.

For a minute Roberts was silent. Then he stopped the car suddenly and turned in his seat. Stark, unreasoning fear was in his eyes.

"I'm—I'm sorry, sir. Have you seen anything—that is—anyone following along the road?"

"On foot?" Brewster roared. "Don't be a fool! We've been driving well over thirty-five."

The butler started the car again.

"You must be right sir, but—I'd swear . . ." His voice trailed off into nothingness.

"You thought what?" Brewster asked angrily.

Roberts was driving much faster now. The car bounced over the ruts and Brewster held tightly to the side of the seat.

"When I swerved out of the road," Roberts said, "I did it to avoid hitting a man. That is, I think it was a man."

"You're seeing things," Brewster

said sharply. "There's no one on the moor tonight."

Suddenly Roberts slammed on the brakes and Brewster slid forward, cracking his knee on the back of the seat.

"Clumsy . . ."

He stopped abruptly, staring ahead into the gathering mist. In the road, not ten feet ahead, stood a hooded man with arms upraised. His features were not visible, but a black gown hung down to his ankles and his feet were buried in the mud. Brewster's heart started to pound violently. His hands were shaking.

"It's he again, sir," Roberts said in a hushed voice. "He's been with us all the way from the cross-road."

"Damn you," Brewster said in a strained voice. "You'll have me believing it in a minute."

He leaned toward the window and stuck his head out into the fog.

"Say there—you in the robe. Get off the road, will you?"

THE robed man walked toward the car slowly. He came close to the window. Brewster could make out a dark, wrinkled face and two vacant, staring eyes that seemed to have no pupils. They were large and almost white in color. The stranger leaned close to Brewster before he spoke.

"I'm here, sir, to help you in your quest." The voice was hollow and matter-of-fact.

Brewster sank back on the cushions. There was only one quest he was interested in and this filthy, marsh creature could not know of that.

"I'm afraid I don't understand you," he said coolly. "Now that you are out of the road, we'd like to proceed."

The stranger stood his ground, two slim-fingered, muddy hands clutching the side of the car.

"But you're wrong, sor," he insisted. "I know of the babe. Perhaps you'd be looking for it?"

Brewster's hands clenched and he gazed at the man with horror in his eyes.

"How — could — you . . .?" His breath came hurriedly, hoping and yet dreading that this queer creature might know of Frances. "I have told no one."

"Then you have news before going to further trouble," the man said. "You don't want to leave me alone on the moor when I can tell you where Frances Brewster may be found?"

"Frances . . ." The man knew his daughter's name. Brewster thought only Quantry and the dead nurse knew that. Could this be some kin of Nurse Jenson's? No, he decided, the man is too unearthly. Too much like the nightmare creatures of the moor.

He pushed the door open quickly, and moved to the far side of the seat.

"Get in," he said. "We cannot talk here."

The stranger chuckled.

"Thank you, sor. It's been long since I drove about, gentlemanlike, in a fine coach."

The stench of him, when he closed the door, was as though he had lived his life in the unwashed robe. His teeth, which Brewster could make out in the faint light, were strong and sharp.

Roberts started the car mechanically, never daring to look back at the man behind him. He drove swiftly, the few remaining miles to the hall.

Let the Master handle this creature. Roberts had seen many strange things on Blackfen Moor, but this robed man was the strangest and the most terrible.

Once in the library, Brewster turned on all the lights and touched a match to the wood in the fireplace. Under strong light the deep-lined face and the

round, almost white eyes of his visitor didn't trouble him so deeply. The very fact that he might find out something of Frances was enough to allay his fears.

The stranger remained standing until Brewster had finished. Then he went to the windows and drew all the shades carefully. Brewster watched him through half-closed eyes as he leaned close to the door and listened for an indication that someone was outside. Then he shuffled across the rug and stood before the master of Brewster Hall.

"We have long known you would look for your daughter when the time came," he said.

"But I don't understand how you found out I was searching for her."

WALTER BREWSTER had no intention of saying too much. There was that feeling of distrust. A feeling that he was dealing with a crafty, almost unworldly creature.

The man's face never changed expression. He had a mission and only words would perform it.

"I know where you can find her."

Brewster leaned forward eagerly. It made no difference how or where. He must see Frances at all costs.

"You can lead me to her?"

The man nodded.

"What is your price?" Brewster sprang to his feet. "Name any amount. It makes no difference who you are or where you came from. I'll ask no questions. Take me to my daughter."

The stranger remained calm.

"Wait, sor," he said. "You will have to enter the wildest part of the moor. It's a dark, rainy night. It's not comfortable for so fine a gentleman." His words were tinged with sarcasm. "Perhaps the shock would be too great."

"Shock?" Brewster demanded impatiently. "Shock? I don't understand. My daughter is all right?"

A quick nod of the robed head, and a hard chuckle.

"Right as light, sor. The price will be fair enough."

"Name it, I say. We must start at once."

"There is no price, other than you show me, this night, a will that leaves all your possessions to your only child. Also, that you promise that regardless of what happens, she will have a home here as long as she lives and that she be allowed to bring her friends here as she pleases."

"The will can be arranged at once." Brewster stepped to the wall and jerked on the long bell cord. "Roberts will bring it. It does not, of course, state my daughter's name, because I did not know it. The rest is taken care of by law. As for a home and a place to bring her friends, Frances may bring whom she pleases to Brewster Hall. I imagine the girl has been poor. That she has many girl companions among the poor families of the countryside."

A cunning smile crossed the stranger's face.

"I wouldn't say that she had poor friends, sor," he said softly. "But they's them that thinks we're a bit queer."

Brewster's jaw dropped.

"You—you are one of my daughter's companions?"

The robed head nodded in agreement.

"Her best friend," he said coldly. "They call me Monk, and there are a lot of us who don't look so pleasant as I do. We ain't bad when you get to know us."

Brewster shuddered.

"I hadn't expected . . ." he began, but a sharp knock on the library door

interrupted him. Roberts stepped in, his eyes flashing suspiciously at the man with his master.

"You rang for me, sir?"

Brewster's shoulders squared suddenly and then dropped again. His voice was tired.

"Yes, Roberts. Bring my will from the study."

CHAPTER V

Frances Brewster Returns

WALTER BREWSTER prided himself that he knew every inch of Blackfen Moor. Tonight, however, it may have been the rain that slanted across the sky in white sheets. Whatever it was, he found himself in a strange world, able only to keep his eyes on the steadily plodding figure in black who went ahead of him into the wildest part of the moor.

Brewster lost sight of Monk several times, then by brushing the rain from his heavy brows and straining his eyes into the distance, Monk became visible again, silhouetted against the white trunk of a barkless tree or outlined by a lightning flash. They moved steadily ahead for hours. Brewster's breath was coming hard and he realized that this was more exercise than he had dared to take for the past several years.

Never a word passed between them after they left the Hall. The man who led him seemed to be following a well-worn path, so sure was he of his direction.

Brewster could find no familiar landmark in the vast bog. The land was lower here. His feet sank into the soft turf and water oozed into his shoes. He was thoroughly miserable when at last Monk stopped and waited for him to mount a small hill to his side.

With water tracing the wrinkles of

his face and the robe wet and clinging to his skinny body, Monk looked even wilder than he had at the Hall.

"A fair hike for a man of your age," he said, and the grin that accompanied his words was unpleasant.

Brewster, a little frightened from the beginning, wondered why he had trusted himself to the stranger's care.

"We are close to the place where my daughter lives?" he asked.

Monk remained standing before him, a sardonic grin on his lips, colorless eyes staring into Brewster's face.

"Very close," he said. "You are still sure that you wish to go ahead?"

Brewster grew angry.

"By all means, man," he said impatiently. "Am I a fool to come this distance in the rain and turn back when I am close to finding the child I've longed for these twenty years?"

Monk shrugged.

"Come along, sor," he said, and struck out across the top of the knoll.

The walk after that was a short one. Brewster saw the dim candle flame at a distance and knew they approached a hut.

Something within him warned that his daughter could never live in so filthy a shanty, and yet he had come so far that he could not turn back. Just what he expected as Monk threw open the door, Brewster did not know. He did not expect the single, poorly lighted empty room into which he walked. There was a table in the center of the dirt floor and on it a single candle burned down until the wax ran from the holder and onto the rough planks. Brewster looked about quickly, wheeling toward Monk as he slammed the door.

"You've—you've tricked me!" he said hoarsely. "No one, least of all my own daughter, lives in such a hovel."

Monk remained calm.

"Be patient, sor," he said. "You will remain here out of the storm. I will bring the girl to you shortly."

He turned and went outside. Brewster stepped to the door quickly, looked for a bar with which to lock it and found none. He backed slowly to the table, and sat down on its broad top.

HE SAT there for several minutes. Outside the storm had grown more violent. The low brush growth outside the single window whipped back and forth in the wind. Lightning, jagged and sharp, outlined the hill down which they had come and the single, whitened stump at its top.

The rain swished angrily against the window and dripped through the thatched roof. For the first time in his life Walter Brewster was really frightened. If he returned to the Hall without a knife in his ribs, the journey held more pleasure than he now imagined possible.

He heard footsteps slushing through the mud outside. Voices, low and mixed hopelessly by the wind, came to him through the door. The panel swung open. Monk came in, holding the door wide, his body bent low from the waist.

A girl walked proudly into the hut. Her body was covered with a snug red cape that fell to shapely ankles. Her head fitted snugly into a high peaked red hood. It wasn't her clothing that Brewster saw first. The face, *her* face, was tanned and had the softness of silk. Wide, almost black, eyes stared at him wonderingly but there was no smile of greeting on the full, red lips.

Brewster stepped toward her, arms outstretched.

"Frances!" he said in a hushed voice. "My God, girl, you're the image of your mother."

She turned away from him slightly, looking questioningly at Monk. Some signal must have flashed between them because a smile parted her lips and she allowed Brewster to take her hands in his.

"I—am—glad," she said haltingly. "I am told that I am to go to Brewster Hall with you. I hope you will have me."

Brewster was about to clasp his arms about her. He wanted to draw the child close. To tell her that if she wished it, Brewster Hall and the whole world would be at her command. To his surprise and anguish, she stepped away from him hurriedly, eyes smouldering with an emotion that was new to him. There was either intense hatred or fear there. She did not want him to touch her body.

"I'm—I'm sorry if I startle you." His arms dropped at his side. "It's been so long, and now that I find I have such a bewitching creature for a daughter, I'm afraid my emotions aren't quite under control."

The smile returned, but she stayed well out of his reach.

"Shall we go to your home?" the girl asked abruptly.

"By all means," Brewster said eagerly. "We will start at once."

He turned to Monk.

"You can guide us out of the moor?"

Monk grinned, and his teeth glittered strangely in the candle light.

"If the girl needs me," he said. "But she knows the moor well."

Frances Brewster turned quickly, her eyes on the robed man.

"Please," she said. "It is all strange to me. You will come!"

It was a command, not a question, and Monk bowed again in deep respect.

The rain had not lessened in volume but the girl did not seem to mind. She walked ahead of Brewster, her slim

figure weaving gracefully through the marsh. As happy as was Walter Brewster to find his daughter, the strangeness of the meeting, and the frightened greeting she offered him, left him taken aback.

He was a tired, very uneasy old man. The girl, although startling in her beauty, was almost too much like Pamela in appearance. Could he be happy with her? Walter Brewster wasn't sure. Not at all sure.

CHAPTER VI

Witch of Blackfen Moor

DOCTOR THADDIUS QUANTRY jumped from his bed, only partly awake. His bare feet against the cold floor brought him quickly to his senses. The telephone in the hall was ringing. For how long, he could not guess, but there was something about the call at two in the morning that made him nervous. People did not call Quantry at this time of the night unless something serious was afoot.

He picked up the receiver.

"Quantry speaking," he said, a little sourly. "Who is it?"

"Doctor Quantry." The voice on the wire was low and vibrant. He could detect no fear, but there was something in it that sent little currents of fright prickling down his spine. "This is Frances Brewster. Will you come to the Hall at once?"

"*Frances Brews . . .*" The doctor's jaw dropped. "You said . . .?"

"Please, Doctor, there is no time to waste. My father is very ill."

Quantry tried to remain calm. Only tonight he and Walter had talked of the missing girl. Now, a few hours later, she was speaking to him in a voice as cool and matter-of-fact as though she had lived with her father

since birth. Quantray sharpened his voice slightly to cover the shakiness that he felt.

"But, good lord, girl, where did you come from?"

Frances Brewster's reply was more abrupt than his question and filled with sudden impatience.

"While we stand here discussing me, my father is dying. Are you coming or aren't you?"

Quantray awakened to the critical condition he was facing.

"I'll be there shortly," he said. "Wait for me and see that your father is given every attention. Roberts will know what to do."

She started to say something else, but Quantray hung up quickly and ran from the room. He shouted down the corridor.

"Phyllis, tell Philip to saddle the horse. I think the boy's still in the laboratory."

Sounds came from the far end of the hall and Phyllis Quantray, lovely in a soft sleeping gown and a wealth of wild, brown hair, pushed a sleepy head through a doorway.

"But Dad—tonight? The storm is still bad."

Quantray grinned.

"Sorry," he said. "Can't be helped. Move along now. Walter Brewster's had a bad spell."

He thought it better not to confuse the situation by mentioning the return of Brewster's daughter.

Phyllis was fully awakened now.

"Sorry, Dad," she said. "I'll call Philip at once."

He made sure she was on her way toward the rear of the house with a lamp, then returned to his room and dressed quickly. From the rear door he heard the girl's voice calling calling Philip Brown from the laboratory and the polite tone of Brown's reply.

WHEN Quantray reached the front door, Brown had already saddled the mare and was waiting in his rain coat for the doctor to come out.

Brown had a tall, slightly bent body and keen eyes that came from patient hours over test tubes.

"Nice night," Doctor," he said with a grin.

Quantray swung into the saddle and took the reins from the younger man.

"Brewster's had a bad spell," he said. "I may be out until morning. If any calls come in, take them, will you?"

"And leave my little pets, the typhoid bacillus?"

Quantray grunted impatiently and brought the quirt down on the mare's flank. Philip Brown jumped to one side as the horse leaped forward. He waved his fist after the doctor in mock anger.

"I'll sue you for that, Doc Quantray," he shouted after the retreating figure. "So help me, I'll sue you."

Still smiling, he turned toward the laboratory. Phyllis was staring at him from the partly drawn curtain of her window. He blew her a kiss and, with head down against the rain, went back to the laboratory.

Quantray could see the single light at the entrance of the old castle. The rain blotted out the remainder of Brewster Hall as though it did not exist. He spurred the horse onward with a sharp dig on her flanks. No one awaited him as he went quickly up the steps to the porch. He found the knocker, applied his hand to it with gusto, and blew the rain from his nose as he waited.

Footsteps sounded loud against the tile floor and the door opened. Quantray's eyes widened. It was Frances Brewster, right enough. The girl was the image of her mother, yet even more

lovely in her youth. The doctor stared at her, and the thing that had been troubling him these many years was once more uppermost in his mind.

"Come in quickly," she said. "Father is in the library."

Quantry stepped inside, removing his coat. Roberts wasn't about. He tossed his coat on a chair by the door and followed the girl into the library. She was wearing a red cape and snug boots covered her small feet. Quantry's eyes studied her perfect shoulders, trying to pierce the soft fabric that covered them.

Then he saw Brewster stretched out on the library couch and he went past the girl and kneeled swiftly at the stricken man's side.

He tested Brewster's pulse and heart quickly. There was still life, but little of it, in Walter Brewster's exhausted body.

Quantry turned to the girl.

"He has had the pills I left with Roberts?"

There was a cold stubbornness in her eyes.

"I tried to tell you that Roberts was not here."

Ignoring her, Quantry delved into his bag and brought out several vials. He pressed a small bottle of liquid to Brewster's lips and forced him to drink. Brewster's breath came harder, and moaning with pain, he opened his eyes. His gaze riveted to the slender, feminine figure behind the doctor.

He muttered something that the doctor could not understand, and started to struggle fiercely.

Try as he might, Quantry could not hold him down. Seemingly unable to recognize his old friend, Brewster tottered to his feet and took one hesitant step toward the girl. She drew away from him hurriedly.

"Creature of Hell!"

Brewster's words were thick with pain. He pitched forward on his face, rolled over once and stared up at the ceiling with slowly glazing eyes.

QUANTRY dropped to his knees, placing the stethoscope to the man's chest. He rose and faced the girl with cold anger in his steady eyes.

"Why did you come?" he demanded. "He was well enough alone, without you."

Frances Brewster smiled.

"I believe, Doctor Quantry, that a sizable fortune comes to me with my father's death?"

"You could have left him alone to die in peace. What did he do to deserve the end you brought him?"

The girl's lips curled into a savage snarl.

"He cursed me as he cursed my mother," she said. "And you, fool that you are, pronounced me dead to hide the secret from him."

Quantry took a threatening step forward. His fingers clenched, then loosened slowly. His voice shook with fury.

"If that death could only have been real," he whispered. "I wish to God that I had killed you that night, while there was yet time to save you from—from . . ."

"From Hell, Doctor?"

Quantry shuddered, and the girl went on.

"Let us not forget that you *did* sign that death certificate, and that if you do not serve me as I wish, I will betray you to your own kind. I imagine your reputation would suffer considerably if it became known that I am alive."

The color drained from Quantry's face.

"And to think that I let you live, hoping somehow . . ."

The girl interrupted him, drawing her shoulders up proudly.

"... somehow, I would escape the fate my father and mother gave to me? It is not too bad, Doctor; I will show you."

She flung back the cape from her shoulders suddenly, and stood before him with back and shoulders bared.

Quantry felt a shudder go through him, shaking his very soul. He cursed himself fervently and muttered a prayer under his breath.

The girl was straight and tall. The tiny, bone knobs that had projected from her back on the night she was born, had grown to wide-spread, bat-like wings. She raised her arms above her head and the wings sprang outward with a sudden flurry of sound. She stepped close to him so that the horrible, ribbed things fluttered over them both. The still air of the room reeked with a fetid animal odor.

"I am a lovely sight, am I not, Doctor Quantry?" Her eyes hardened and became points of blackness. "Do you think I have any pity for the parents who conceived me as I am?"

Quantry sank back on the couch, his mouth wide. He could only shake his head. When he tried to speak, a dull, croaking sound came from his throat.

"The wings," she said. "They are almost ready to fly. With your care and the riches left to me by my father's will, I shall soon be ready for my conquest."

"Conquest?" He managed to repeat the one word.

The girl's wings sank to her sides and she faced him like a carved statue.

"Do you imagine that I will not make the world pay for this life I live?" Her voice sank to a whisper. *"I have friends, Doctor. Friends who have been waiting impatiently for this time. You will grow to know them well and*

care for them when they need care. That is your part of the debt."

Quantry struggled to his feet and went swiftly toward the door. He dared not look back, or think of what he had seen, lest he go mad before he could escape.

Her voice drifted to him as he opened the door.

"You will come often, Doctor. When I call you here, don't hesitate, or I will tell the world that you abducted me at birth and told my loving parent that I died."

Quantry whirled around, his teeth bared. He leaned against the door like a caged beast.

"You—you witch!" he shouted.

The girl's laughter echoed through the stillness of the hall.

"A witch? Yes, Doctor Quantry. The witch of Blackfen Moor."

CHAPTER VII

Shadow of Doubt

PHILIP BROWN had studied with Thaddius Quantry for twenty years. Brown, a quiet, sincere man of thirty-five retained much of his youthful appearance and all of the humor he had when Quantry brought him, at fifteen, to learn the inner workings of a doctor's laboratory. Philip Brown, because he was satisfied with the quiet life of Langley Crossroads, lived contentedly at the cottage and became more a member of the family than a long period boarder.

He had done some notable research work with typhoid bacillus, and London medicine journals gave him credit for improvements in treating this dread disease. Between his long trips to London, Philip Brown continued to court Phyllis Quantry with a steadiness that threatened to drive her mad.



She was an eerie, yet lovely, creature of unnamed regions

It was close to morning of the same day that Quantry had gone to Brewster Hall. The old doctor had returned home several hours ago and Brown heard him lead the mare to the stable. He was a little disturbed that Quantry had not stopped in at the laboratory, but knew the old man would be tired and hoped he had gone straight to bed.

Brown glanced at his watch. Nearly six. He put several cotton-sealed test tubes away carefully, and turned the switch that cut the yellow light from the laboratory. Pale dawn over Blackfen Moor, sent a gray shaft of light into the room. Outside, the air was fresh and the rain had vanished.

Accustomed to a light snack after working all night, Brown entered the small kitchen. To his surprise, Phyllis was up and dressed in neat blue calico.

She greeted him with a smile as he came in.

"Good morning, Philip. You worked a full shift, I see."

Brown sank down in the chair at the table, sniffed the hot buns that she had placed on the cloth, and groaned.

"Sometimes I think typhoid germs aren't so bad after all, and why do I waste my time chasing them around corners."

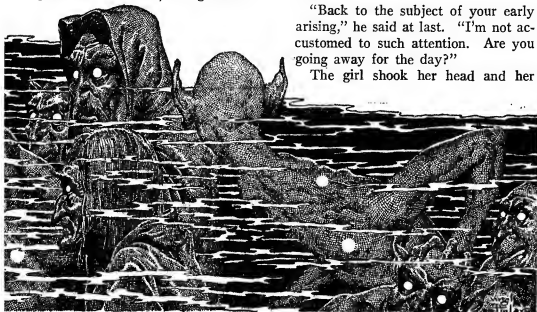
The girl brought coffee from the stove and poured a fresh cup for him. She stood back, studying the grave-faced young man. Philip, she thought, could be in London, supported by rich patients and making a fine name for himself. Perhaps the very fact that he was content to remain here had discouraged her feelings toward him.

Phyllis Quantry was by no means unattractive. She had met Philip when she was a child of six and had grown up to regard him as a vastly older person. At twenty-six, Doctor Quantry's daughter was all things that Frances Brewster was not. Their figures compared favorably, but Phyllis Quantry's light brown eyes and well-braided hair produced the effect of light-heartedness that could have no connection with evil.

BROWN drank his coffee in long sips and munched on the fresh rolls.

"Back to the subject of your early arising," he said at last. "I'm not accustomed to such attention. Are you going away for the day?"

The girl shook her head and her



eyes clouded.

"I want to talk with you, Phil."

Brown turned in his chair and stared at her. Phyllis' voice was low and filled suddenly with emotion. He thought she appeared to have been crying and cursed himself for not noticing before.

"Something is wrong?"

She sat down opposite him.

"Phil, it's about Dad. He's been acting strangely the last few days."

Brown chuckled.

"Oh, that," he said. "Haven't you noticed that whenever he and old Walter Brewster get together, the sparks start flying?"

For a moment she didn't answer. Then her eyes met his.

"Mr. Brewster is dead," she said.

Brown put the cup down quickly.

"Last night?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Dad refuses to talk about it. He says Mr. Brewster's heart was very bad and that last night something happened that was too much of a shock."

Brown looked thoughtful.

"He told you about his visit to the Hall?"

Phyllis leaned over the table.

"That's what troubles me," she confessed. "Dad told me only what I've told you. You probably heard him come in some time ago?"

Philip Brown nodded.

"I met him on the stairs. I've never seen Dad with that wild, frightened look in his eyes. I asked him if he wanted coffee or tea and he just shook his head. I had to follow him to find out what I did. He seemed so terribly depressed about something. It was as though he were trying to—well—to escape from something or someone."

Brown chuckled.

"Bosh!" he said. "Doc Quantry never tried to escape trouble in his life.

He was tired and you misunderstood him."

Phyllis' eyes were suddenly misty with tears.

"I've always thought you would listen to me, although others might not. Dad's been under some sort of strain for years. Brewster has something to do with it and I can't understand what. I wish you . . ."

"Look," he interrupted her eagerly. "You know I'll do anything on earth to help you out. I think this is your imagination, but I'll try to help. Should I talk with your father?"

She rose, frightened by his suggestion.

"No, not to *him*. I'd—I'd like you to go to Brewster Hall. Perhaps some of the servants can give you a clue of what was wrong between Father and Walter Brewster. I'd like to help him if I can, but—well, without you on my side, it's pretty helpless."

BROWN stood up slowly and rounded the table until he was standing close to the girl.

"Phyllis," he said hesitantly. "I wish you'd . . ."

She drew away from him.

"Please, Phil, I know what you're going to say. You've said it before and it hurts to say no. I like you a lot, but you seem more like . . ."

His face turned suddenly red.

"You were going to say I was more like a father or a brother to you?"

She nodded, not trusting her voice. A tear slipped down her cheek.

"You'll go to Brewster Hall for me, and for Dad?"

"I'll go," he said stiffly. "For you."

She heard him in the front of the house, searching for his pipe, and remembered she had cleaned it carefully and filled it with fresh tobacco.

"You'll find your pipe on the table

in the hall," she called.

His single word — "Thanks" — drifted back to her.

She sat down at the table and started to cry softly. If only Phil Brown wasn't so slow-minded and good-natured about such things. The man she married must sweep her away from the commonplace. He must have fire and spirit that did not come from long hours hunched over test tubes.

CHAPTER VIII

Prelude to Hell

THE butcher, his fat belly torn open with a knife, had not lived long enough to tell who had attacked him. It had happened quite suddenly, disaster sweeping down on the peaceful hamlet of Langley Crossroad in the light of day. Disaster made doubly horrible by the fact that death had struck in the bright sunlight and had not waited for the blackness of night to carry out its grim task.

Doctor Qantry was dragged into it soon after dinner. He had eaten silently, talking to his companions only enough to relieve the strain of a meal without speech. Qantry was nervous. Soon, he knew, the phone would ring and Frances Brewster would summon him to Brewster Hall. The witch of Blackfen Moor, she called herself, and she had a purpose in binding him to her with the threat of exposure.

The bell tinkled loudly in the hall and Qantry hunched forward in his chair, his cup of tea sinking to the cloth. Phyllis rose and went to the door. While she was gone, Qantry felt Philip's eyes focused keenly upon him, and he dared say nothing.

Phyllis returned, her face pale, voice low and even.

"It's the constable," she said.

"You're needed in town at once."

Qantry stood up, his knees shaking beneath him.

"For what?"

He hoped the girl at the Hall had not already carried out her threat to betray his secret.

"Butcher Moydan was killed in his shop. The constable says your coming will be a matter of form."

Both men left the room at once. As Philip Brown went out, he turned and sent a reassuring smile in the girl's direction. Then he followed Qantry into the street.

THE constable, William Laughlin, talked rapidly as they walked down the lane toward the thatched shop.

"He's lying there in a pool of blood, he is!" Laughlin was a skinny, excitable man of fifty. "I'm telling you. Moydan looks like one of his own slaughtered sows. Ripped clean through the belly, and over five hundred pounds of meat stolen."

"Meat," Philip Brown said questioningly. "I don't understand. How could anyone steal that much meat, and murder a man, in broad daylight?"

Constable Laughlin shuddered.

"It's the people of Blackfen Moor," he said with an uneasy glance over his shoulder. "Them that are heard but ain't seen."

"Rubbish." Qantry was regaining his nerve. "We'll get to the bottom of this soon enough. Call in men from the Yard and have them track down our killer."

"Oh, they's tracks, right enough," Laughlin protested. "Not human ones, mind you, but they's cart tracks and blood in the road half way to Brewster Hall."

Qantry felt the skin on his neck prickle sharply.

"But how . . .?"

"Easy enough," Laughlin said. "If you're going to ask how it could happen. Moydan always closed the shop for an hour at noon. They's them that remember a man driving a cart away from the back door about half-past the hour. The cart went toward the moor and up the road toward Brewster Hall. That reminds me, I'd best send a man up to warn Walter Brewster a murderer is at large near his home."

"That won't be necessary," Quantry said quickly. "Brewster died late last night. I was with him to the end."

The constable groaned.

"If it ain't one, it's two," he said. "Now we'll be digging two holes in the graveyard. Well, here we are."

They had reached the dirty, fly-specked window with *William Moydan—Butcher* lettered across it with black paint. The constable turned in and the two men followed him in. He unlocked the door.

Moydan had been a big man, and in death he wasn't a pretty sight. He lay stretched out before the counter, his arms and legs flung wide, the mountain of a belly pushed upward. The meat cleaver, red with blood, lay at his side. Quantry's breath sucked in sharply, and Philip Brown, after a single glance, went back to the door and stood there, staring out the glass and down the quiet street. He heard Quantry say: "He's dead enough. You'd better have him moved to the morticians."

Laughlin muttered something about needing six men to do it. Brown felt Quantry's hand on his shoulder and they went out into the sunlight.

Neither of them spoke until they were halfway home. Then Quantry stopped suddenly in his tracks.

"Tell Phyllis I'll be home in time for supper," he said. "I think I'd better run a little errand before it's too late."

Brown turned, startled by the sud-

den bitterness in his friend's voice.

"Look, Doctor," he said hesitantly. "If you're in trouble . . ."

Quantry shot him a keen glance, then grinned stubbornly.

"Ever since I was born, I've been in some kind of trouble. People always load me down with theirs when I haven't enough of my own."

Brown wouldn't be led away from the point.

"I mean it," he said. "There's bad blood between you and someone up at Brewster Hall. I'd like to go up there and see things through for you. Phyllis thinks . . ."

He stopped, flushed.

Quantry grunted.

"So that daughter of mine has been putting you up to things, has she?"

"No . . . that is," Brown stammered, "we were worried about you. If there's anything I can do . . ."

"Forget it, boy. You stick to research and leave the country doctoring to me. I'll run out and make sure Brewster's body is taken care of. I have to take the undertaker out and make a few arrangements."

Surprised that he could be brushed aside so easily, Philip Brown walked alone toward the cottage. Close to home, he stopped and turned. Doctor Quantry was just visible near the road that led into Blackfen Moor. He was walking swiftly. A stubbornness showed in Philip Brown's eyes and his jaw stiffened. He had been pushed around once too often. This time it was different. He couldn't let Phyllis down. He started along the moor road.

CHAPTER IX

A Witch Can Love

FRANCES BREWSTER heard the knocker above the raucous sounds

in the dining-hall, and went to the door. Her face was still flushed with pleasure, but the smile suddenly went cold.

"Doctor Quantry? You came even before I called for you."

Thaddius Quantry was covered with dust from head to foot. The sun had soaked up the rain quickly from the road and left it dry and gray. The doctor's face was grim.

"You'll ask me in?"

"But of course." The girl stepped away from the entrance, allowing him to precede her into the great hall. "I hope your visit will be short and to the point. You see, I am entertaining."

Quantry faced her, his eyelids lifting in surprise.

"You have guests?"

The girl grinned delightedly, her face glowing.

"You will see them all presently," she said. "Come to the balcony that overlooks the dining-hall."

Puzzled, Quantry followed her up the broad stairs and along an upper corridor. He was forced to admire the trim figure of the girl as she walked ahead of him. With her body clad in the robe, the wings were not visible and he could almost forget them, so lovely was she in her disguise.

Ahead of them was the huge, grilled wall from which one could look down on the dining-table without being seen. The girl stopped, pointing a finger downward and Quantry turned to survey her friends. His eyes bulged and he clutched the rail of the balcony to steady himself.

In that instant all was forgotten except the hellish, unbelievable sight that was taking place below him. Walter Brewster's banquet table was running red with the blood of huge chunks of fresh meat. Its entire length was lost under slabs of beef and pork.

Arranged solemnly around the table,

in ancient, high-backed chairs, was the most horrible collection of beasts he had ever seen. Some of them wore clothing, like Monk. Others wore nothing, resembling huge apes with grinning, evil faces. There were short creatures with immense paunches and thick, hanging chins. There were skinny, lank animals with huge ears that covered the sides of their heads and scalps that were dark-skinned and hairless.

Quantry turned, staring at the girl.

"These—these . . ." he gulped, not able to express what was in his mind.

"Creatures from Hell, Doctor," the girl breathed softly. "My best companions. Friends with whom I was condemned to live and to grow to womanhood. They look to me for leadership."

"But the meat," Quantry realized that the half-formed fears in his mind had proven correct. "This is the meat from the village. Those demons murdered the butcher."

The girl chuckled.

"Monk did that," she explained in a matter-of-fact tone. "You see, they live on fresh meat. It is better thus, than for them to feed on human flesh."

QUANTRY could believe that. As he watched, several of them reached for a slab of beef. They screamed and fought over it like dogs. A monkey-like, chattering creature jumped on the table, grasped the beef in both arms and ran to the far end of the room. He sat there tearing the meat fibers apart eagerly and stuffing them into his mouth.

"But you can't expect to get away with this," Quantry protested. "The police will find the wagon. They will see that you are punished."

The smile left Frances Brewster's face. She was very close to him, her

black eyes boring into his.

"I have learned one thing, Doctor," she said. "You mortals have an all powerful weapon called money. Money will buy everything on earth, even justice. I will fight every agency that is against us. By the time they decide that we are to be wiped out, we shall be too powerful."

The clatter of the door knocker came from the hall and the sounds below them stopped abruptly. The girl turned away from him and went back toward the stairs.

"We are having many visitors today," she said. "Would you care to greet them with me?"

Quantry hesitated. He must remain at her beck and call if he wished to live. What if Laughlin and the police had already tracked the cart to the Hall? Were coming to take away their man? What would be said when they found that Frances Brewster was alive?

He waited as the girl went down the stairs and threw open the door. From his vantage point, Quantry saw Philip Brown as the younger man took off his hat, spoke to Frances Brewster and stepped inside. Quantry went down to them hurriedly.

"Philip," he said. "I hadn't expected you."

Brown stared at him, then realized that the doctor was angry, and came toward him, smiling.

"Sorry, Doc," he said. "I was a bit worried about you this morning. Thought I'd come out and make sure you were all right."

He turned toward Frances Brewster, his eyes filled with admiration.

"Doctor, you didn't tell me such a charming young lady resided at the Hall. Was that the reason you hurried out here, keeping the secret from us?"

Quantry saw the warm, attentive look

the girl gave Philip Brown and a new fear sped through him. It would be better to end this thing quickly.

"Philip," he said, "I assume you introduced yourself at the door. In the event that you did not, this is Frances Brewster, Walter's daughter."

BROWN frowned, a look of understanding flooding his face. He stepped toward the girl and held out his hand. She took it in both of hers and stood very still, staring up at his face. Quantry was shocked to find a look akin to admiration in her eyes.

"So!" Brown said slowly. "Now I understand why Doc Quantry was so worried about us coming with him to Brewster Hall, Miss Frances. We thought you were dead. Surely you've been away for many years? I'd have seen . . ."

She did not remove her hands from his. He felt nervous, and a little happy at the warm contact.

She nodded.

"I've been away a long time," she said. "Only now do I realize how long it has been."

The meaning escaped neither of them. Quantry cleared his throat hurriedly and Philip Brown turned red about the neck.

"I—I'm very glad to meet you," he stammered. "I hope that now we have discovered the doctor's secret, you will let me see you more often."

"Thank you," the girl answered. "I'm sorry you can't stay longer, but Doctor Quantry was about to leave. I have some friends dining whom I don't wish to leave alone for long."

Brown smiled.

"I understand how that is," he said.

Frances Brewster stared hard at Quantry.

"I'm not sure you do," she said. "But, in all events, we shall meet again. The

doctor has just discussed one of my friends with me. You see, he had a little trouble with a knife, and the doctor has done a fine job on the wound."

Quantry thought of the deep slash in Moydan's body and the devilish creatures that even now were leaning forward at the dining-table aware of every word he spoke.

"Thank you," he said with as much coolness as he could muster. "And now, Philip, if you are ready."

They went out on the porch and the bright sunshine made Quantry feel better. Thank God, Philip had not seen the things at the Hall. Nor did Brown mention a word of Frances Brewster.

At last, no longer able to keep his thoughts to himself, Quantry looked sharply at his friend.

"I wish you hadn't followed me today," he said. "I'm not accustomed to being treated like a child."

Brown chuckled, pushed his pipe firmly in the side of his mouth and wagged a finger at the old man.

"Shame on you for keeping such a charming secret from me, Doc," he said. "Frances Brewster is beautiful and you and Walter kept her hidden all these years. I realize today why Langely Crossroads is such a fine place for me to work."

Quantry had been afraid of this.

"There are other things at the Hall which are not so pleasant," he said bitterly. "I'd advise you to stay away."

"Can't promise, Doc," Brown said quickly. "But that girl's got something that makes all my typhoid bacillus seem unimportant!"

CHAPTER X

The Awakening

IN THE month since Philip Brown had first seen the girl of Brewster Hall, many things had happened in

Langely Crossroads. Farmers reported that their animals had been killed at night and only the bones found in the morning. Men were knocked down while returning from their fields and food taken from them. No one ever saw these mysterious invaders who stole flesh by the dark of night. They were sinister shadows, prowling when the moon was hidden.

For the first time, Philip Brown was on his way to visit Frances Brewster. He had phoned first, asking for the opportunity, and now in the dimness of early evening, he rode swiftly toward the castle on Blackfen Moor.

The girl had awakened something in Philip Brown that he had never thought existed. He pitied her for her supposed loneliness and marvelled at her beauty. He felt alive and awakened to the things about him that he had missed during the long lonely years spent over test-tubes.

Brown was no fool. He was not sure that he had succeeded in finding out everything that troubled Quantry. The girl for example? Why had she been hidden for so long, to come suddenly to the Hall when her father died?

He reached Brewster Hall and waited quietly while the girl's footsteps came to him from inside. The door opened and she was smiling at him, more youthful and lovely than before.

Frances Brewster was angry at herself for the emotions she felt toward the man. Since he had left the other night, she had tried without success to keep him from her mind.

She held her hand out in welcome.

"I'm glad you called, Philip. I've been expecting to hear from you."

He held her fingers in his, feeling the warmth of them course through his body.

"Thanks," he said. "You're going to invite me in?"

A startled look came into her eyes and she glanced behind her hurriedly.

"I'd rather walk in the garden if you don't mind," she said. "Have you been in Langely Crossroads long?"

IT WAS pleasant in the old garden behind the castle. Walter Brewster had lavished every care on the grounds. There was no suggestion of strife or unhappiness here. They walked side by side for a distance, reached the edge of the garden and wandered into the moor. Her hand sought his and held it tightly as they walked. Her voice was soft and confiding, telling of her love for the moor and how beautiful it was tonight under the moon.

He tried to find out something of what had happened to her since that night when he was fifteen and Doctor Quantry had ridden home to announce that both she and her mother were dead. At his mention of her personal life, her fingers tightened in his and a frown crossed her face.

He wondered also why each time she saw him, the long cape covered her slim body, its lower edge trailing in the grass.

They walked for what seemed a long time. The moon rose high and for the first time in weeks, a soft peacefulness spread over Blackfen Moor. It could be beautiful like this forever, Brown thought, but usually it chose to show its teeth in storms and become a forbidding, remote place.

They found a stump and the girl sat down. Philip lighted his pipe and stretched out on the grass at her feet. Smoking peacefully, he talked of any small thing that came to mind.

Frances Brewster was completely at peace with the world.

"You have become quite famous in research work on typhoid, Doctor

Quantry tells me?" Her words were a question.

He took the pipe from his mouth, and chuckled.

"I've become second brother to a test tube," he said dryly. "I'm only beginning to realize what I've been missing."

They were silent for a time, and he wondered if the girl resented his ready friendship. He stared up at the full softness of her face, the dark eyes that stared into space across the moor.

"I suppose you have many friends," she said wistfully. "That is, you've been out with many women and have been about London a great deal?"

He shook his head.

"Sorry," he said; "can't qualify for that role. I've lived more or less a lonely life. Don't get much time away from writing reports and checking my findings."

It was growing late. The grass was cool with dew. A wind sprang up and the sea started to pound noisily against the rocks in the distance.

"Frances," Brown said suddenly.

"Yes?" There was a guarded note in her reply.

He stood up.

"There's something wrong at the Hall," he said suddenly. "Something that's troubling you and Doc. Is there anything I can do to help?"

The girl stared at him. A tear formed and dropped to her cheek.

"Nothing," she said firmly.

"But . . ."

"I'm sorry. Nothing that is any of your business and you're better off to leave me alone. You shouldn't have come tonight and I had no business stealing away with you the way I have."

THE sudden change in her voice startled him. For the last few hours he fancied they had been quite close.

Now she seemed to freeze toward him as though his presence was unwelcome.

She came very close to him, her hands on his wrists, her face tipped upward.

"I was a fool to come out here with you tonight," she went on simply. "I was lonely. You're the first man who has been kind to me and I like you a great deal. But that can't alter things as they are. I'll have to ask you not to come again."

He realized then that love had come quickly, welding him to her so tightly that an unkind word cut him to the quick.

"And if I refuse to stay away? If I say that I've fallen in love with you and that I can't change it?"

A gasp escaped her lips and she stepped away from him quickly.

"You can't. You haven't any right."

"But you're not married," he said. "Surely your life is your own. I think you should give me some explanation."

Both wondered what to do or to say next. The night wind was cold and the moon blotted itself out behind rising clouds.

"I told you to go," she said. "I don't want . . ."

"You don't want to give way to your emotions," he said in a sharp voice. "I'm no fool, Frances. I love you and I think you love me. I thought it that first day I met you in the Hall."

He moved toward her suddenly, his arms sweeping about her waist. A low cry of pain escaped her lips and she jerked away from him. Too late! His hand closed about something rough and hard beneath her cloak. A puzzled, frightened look came into his eyes as she managed to break away to stand panting a few feet from him. Her eyes grew cold.

"You shouldn't have done that."

"What the devil?" His face turned

pale. "I—I don't understand."

Her hands went to her throat and fumbled quickly with the catch that held the cape close to her. There was neither kindness nor love in her eyes now. Just that cold, expressionless stare.

"You wanted to know why I couldn't let you come again." The words were spoken mechanically, as though her mind or heart had no control over them. "I tried to make you go. You would never have known. Now you have hurt me and you have made it necessary to hurt you."

With a sweep of her arm she tossed the cape to the ground. She was clad in an exotic, low-cut gown and her shoulders and back were bare. Brown's breath sucked in sharply and his eyes widened.

Huge, bat-like wings spread slowly from her back and rose until they were poised above her body. She stood there in the darkness, a shiver passing through her body.

"I—I don't . . ." He felt like a fool. A poor, blinded fool, unable to understand what he was looking at. Frightened and filled with pity at the same time for something that was beyond his comprehension.

Her eyes remained hard and she made no attempt to hide the horror of her affliction.

"No one has understood," she said coolly. "If for once, someone did, it might help me to forget."

"But—they can't be real. It isn't . . . isn't human."

"I had no control of my destiny," she said.

"In the name of God," he gasped. "Something must be done."

A quick, hard laugh escaped her lips.

"God's name has had no place in my life," she said. "The situation is very much the reverse."

She bent quickly, retrieved her cape and started to don it. Philip Brown stood there, not knowing what to do or to say. Something of what must be in Doctor Quantry's mind was beginning to dawn on him, and he didn't relish sharing the terrible secret.

CHAPTER XI

Search for a Solution

QUANTRY continued to visit Brewster Hall daily. He knew nothing of Philip's experience and managed to make the trips appear casual. The work he did there was too horrible for him to mention or to think of once he was away from the place. He became acquainted with Frances Brewster's companions, as she delighted in calling them. Monk was away on business and came back with a deep knife gash in his side. Quantry treated it without daring to ask questions, only to find that a farmer had been attacked the night before, his live stock stolen and the man himself murdered. The farmer had managed to slash at the intruder with his scythe before the man completed his gruesome job. There was blood on the road and on the scythe.

The trail led to Brewster Hall.

It went on that way for the better part of a month. Langely Crossroads and gradually the whole coast felt the horror of a mysterious ruling force that could not be reached or punished. Quantry knew where the murderers and thieves came from. He could say nothing.

Philip Brown knew enough to keep him awake for hours, trying to reason the whole thing out with the cool mind of a research man. It got him nowhere. He would look up from his bench suddenly, and see the image of Frances Brewster standing before him as she

had that night, smooth shoulders bare to the wind, those waving, ghastly wings balanced above her.

He could face it no longer. Something could and must be done. He loved her, and if she were the Devil himself, it could make no difference. He would speak to Quantry.

The opportunity came that afternoon. Still trying to keep up his interest in the laboratory, Brown spent several hours starting and developing new cultures. Doctor Quantry came in soon after noon and stood behind him, watching the young doctor work. Phyllis was away—at the village he supposed. Quantry wanted to tell Brown more. To confide in him and try to shift some of the burden that weighed heavily on his heart.

It was to be easier than he thought.

Brown turned suddenly, his face dark with concern.

"Why didn't you tell me about Frances?" he asked abruptly.

Quantry looked startled.

"I'm sorry, boy," he admitted. "I wanted to. After that night the mother died, I sent the baby away with the nurse. I had no idea who was to bring up the child. The nurse died and I never worried a great deal until Brewster came and demanded my help in finding his baby."

Brown nodded.

"That isn't what I mean," he said. "Why didn't you tell me about her affliction?"

QUANTRY looked at him steadily for a moment and dawning understanding showed on his face.

"You've seen her body beneath the robe?" His tone was accusing. "You've been up to see her alone?"

Brown was angry.

"I'm free, white and considerably over the age limit," he said. "I had

every right to see the girl again."

"*But what did you see?*" Quantry slumped down in the nearest chair. "What possessed her to taunt you with—with . . . ?"

"With those ghastly wings?" Brown shook his head. "I forced her to it. I love the girl, Doc, and I'm sure she loves me. It hurts like the devil to find that she is . . ."

He stopped talking abruptly, and a questioning look came into his eyes.

"Just what *is* wrong with Frances Brewster? You were there when she was born. Is it a curse? Such things that we read of, but never think to see?"

Quantry failed to answer for a long time. When he did, it was in a detached, far off voice of a man who cannot explain what he wants to say.

"I don't know," he admitted. "Pamela Quantry was a high-strung woman. She ran around with every young fellow between here and London. She practically killed her husband by laughing in his face every time he accused her of unfaithfulness. I know that Walter quarreled with her. She told me the night she died that he said she was a good wife for the devil. After that she laughed wildly and said it wasn't such a bad idea."

"Idiotic," Brown said.

"Not so," Quantry went on. "When the baby was born, it had a tiny stump growing from its back. I tell you, Philip, I came close to losing my mind that night."

"But it's utterly fantastic," Brown said in a low voice.

"Perhaps, but deny that the wings are real. Deny the truth you are faced with. I get the impression that the girl has moments of complete sanity when she is as tender as any woman. Then those damned wings take control of her and she becomes a

demon. She told me herself, that the day they are strong enough to enable her to fly, she will go forth with her companions and rule the world."

"Companions?" Brown turned away from the table, looking down at the old man in the chair. "She isn't alone at the Hall?"

Quantry groaned.

"I wish to God she were," he said.

He told the younger man everything he knew, or guessed, about the vast horde of monsters at Brewster Hall. About their increasing violence and the trouble he had in controlling them.

"And Frances Brewster is their leader?" Brown asked at last. "She is behind all this—this unbelievable terror?"

Quantry nodded.

"I think she hates me for letting her live," he said. "If I don't keep her secret, she threatens that we all shall suffer for it."

"What are we going to do?"

Quantry shrugged and rose.

"Go on as we have been," he said. "We are too weak to fight so powerful a force."

Brown's face turned a brick red.

"Damned if I'll sit still while the first woman I've ever loved makes a demon and a fool of herself. There must be a solution. The curse was placed on her by others. It can be removed."

"But how?"

Brown took his smock off quickly and went toward the washroom. "I don't know," he admitted. "But I'll find a way."

CHAPTER XII

The Time Comes

BROWN stood quietly in the darkness near the gate of Brewster Hall. He looked at his wrist watch,

tipping his wrist in the moonlight until the dial was faintly visible. Midnight. Something was afoot tonight inside the great stone building. Just why he knew tonight was so important, he wasn't sure. For one thing, the Hall was ablaze with light. Figures were visible, although he could make out none of their details. The place was alive with shadowy, vague figures who passed before the windows as he watched.

His stomach felt empty and raw with fear. He clutched his bag tightly, ran a match across his knee and sucked the flame deeply into his pipe. He felt a little better. His jaw was grim as he walked up the gravel path toward the door.

He had to use the knocker for some time before its sound penetrated the high-pitched, excited clamor of voices inside. At last it opened.

Brown, expecting the girl herself, was taken aback by the tall, monk-like figure who greeted him. Monk was excited tonight and he did not want his mistress entertaining outsiders. Although Philip Brown did not know it, tonight was the long awaited time. Now the forces of Satan were drawn up for their great offensive. Frances Brewster was ready to try her wings!

Brown had only time to note the thin, seamed face, the vacant eyes and the dirty robe before Monk spoke, his voice harsh and angry.

"You cannot come in," he said. "The mistress wishes no visitors tonight."

Philip Brown was no coward. He had come for a purpose, be it ever so vague, and he had no intention of turning back. He pushed a heavy shoe in the crack of the open door and stood his ground.

"I'll speak to Miss Frances myself," he said grimly. "I'd rather hear her say that."

Monk groaned.

"You mortals," he said disgustedly. "You never give up battering your heads against a blank wall."

There was an element of mystery about Monk that Brown disliked intensely.

"Tell Frances Brewster to come to the door," he said grimly.

Monk looked at the tall, well-muscled figure and decided to follow the plan of least risk to himself. He turned abruptly, left the door open and stalked inside. Brown waited. Beyond the door he could hear a throng of people milling about the great hall. The voices he did not understand. He pushed the door open slightly, and a large monkey swung across the tile, crouched before him with head cocked on one side and started to chatter angrily.

Brown had already decided that there was a stiff fight ahead. The appearance of Monk, and now this jungle animal, made Quantry's fears even more vivid in his mind.

THERE came shortly, those sharp, determined footsteps that were so familiar to him. He felt an ache in his heart because he knew he must face the girl now and use every method of persuasion that he was capable of, to accomplish his purpose.

The door swung open quickly and Frances was before him. She had tossed the cape away. No clothing covered her lithe body. A queer head-dress covered her hair. It was made of odd, cotton-like stuff and shaped into two tall, symbolic horns. Her wings were outspread, quivering and beating the air slightly.

There was no sign of friendship in her expression, but for an instant he thought he saw a softness in her eyes as she faced him. If he were correct,

it vanished and she became a stone-like statue of evil.

He wanted to turn away. Seeing her unashamed before him, he felt his pulses quicken and the full meaning of the whole thing burst upon him. Quantry had said that the time would come soon when her wings would be ready for flight and she would lead her demons on a last bloody struggle against the world.

She waited for him to speak, evidently sure that her appearance would confuse him and send him away.

"Well?" she said in a tight little voice. "You see that you cannot come in. Please leave at once."

Brown stood his ground.

"I'm leaving when I'm sure you mean to go through with all this. When I know that there is no love in you for what I and the rest of the world stand for."

She stepped back quickly, suddenly afraid.

"There is no love for anyone in my heart." She faltered and her voice lacked conviction. The man had swayed her once before. She must not lose control again.

"We'll see," he said calmly, and stepped inside. Over her shoulder he saw something that drained the blood from his face and made his knees go suddenly weak.

The great hall was filled with creatures like the ones Quantry had described. Apes that wandered up and down the tile floor, huge ears flapping against monstrous skulls. More men like Monk. Evil white-eyed men with tall caps and black robes, who stood about staring at him. On every face was that same deathly, leering grin. Creatures conjured straight from the furnaces of Hell. Brown clenched his teeth tightly, clamping the stem of the pipe. His eyes dropped to Frances

Brewster. Somehow he felt that she was losing some of that splendid control she had first shown. There was a sudden modesty about her. She allowed her shoulders to droop slightly and the wings swept down, spreading an ugly curtain, behind which her body was partly hidden.

"You forced your way in here," she said. "You will have to leave now, before *they* refuse to obey me, and murder you."

"Just as they've murdered those poor people of the village," he said angrily. "For God's sake, Frances, you're not a part of this. It's all some ghastly trick. A trick that forced you into Hell. I'll go, but you'll have to go with me."

Her eyes flashed.

"You fool!" she said. "You poor fool. None of us can escape fate. Don't you understand that this is my heritage? Why should I have any feeling for the people of the earth. They have brought me nothing but unhappiness. If I say that I hate you, will you leave?"

HE FELT that she was pleading with him, rather than threatening his life. There was still a spark of hope. A sudden murmur of anger had arisen. Her followers were growing impatient.

Two skinny, bulgy-eyed creatures were stalking slowly toward him. Ugly, curved horns branched from their heads. One of them carried a knife. Brown waited, his eyes alert, hand on the bulge of cold steel in his right pocket.

"I'm staying here," he said, and his voice was stubborn. "There's a way out; a release for you, and I'm going to find it."

A scream of hatred arose suddenly and the thing with the knife sprang. Brown's automatic came out of his

pocket with one swift movement. The shot echoed loudly through the room and the knife hurtled from his attacker's hand and clattered against marble. The two horned men made a dash for him but Frances Brewster whirled suddenly, a sharp challenging cry escaping her lips. The sounds died at once and, as she continued to speak, he knew she was more angry than he had ever seen her. The attack had been made behind her back and without her knowledge. That fact made it unforgivable.

He did not know what she said but he did know that for the moment she was taking his side.

The horned men went to their knees before her, moaning as though in pain. Her orders were accepted with glee. The crowd closed in, eager to kill even their own kind, for the thrill of seeking blood.

Unable to interfere, Brown watched them close in on the horned men and snatch at them eagerly. A rope made its appearance. Near the stairs, two tall beams rose to the ceiling. Now he knew their purpose. A fat ape grasped the rope and went up the pole quickly. He made a knot near the top and prepared the second pole in the same manner.

Philip Brown's mind was working furiously. The girl stood close to him, her back turned, watching the proceedings. The horned men were dragged across the floor to the ropes. The nooses were fixed tight.

A shrill scream of pain came from the first and died on his lips in a low gurgle. His body was dragged aloft quickly amid screams of delight.

Brown was not watching. He saw the bottom of the stairs ten feet away from him and the open door to the first bedroom above. From the corner of his eye he watched the horned man kick

spasmodically. The legs were motionless then, dangling eight feet above the floor.

Such was the vengeance of the devil woman, when her commands were not respected.

The second horned man swung aloft and every eye in the hall was turned on him as he kicked out his life at the end of the rope.

Philip Brown's arm went tightly around the girl's face, clamping her lips with his broad palm. He picked her up bodily, his surgical bag still dangling loosely on his arm. Her wings beat the air weakly but he could feel only the softness of her and ignored the leathery skin that beat at his face.

In three long steps he reached the stairs. Running swiftly, he went up the steps three at a time. So far so good. They had not noticed. He reached the door of the room and ran inside.

Monk turned and saw him as he pushed the door shut with his elbow.

Below the hall was suddenly hushed, then a new fury of sound came up to him through the closed door. The stairs were covered with a seething wave of inhuman flesh. Monk led them, shouting and cursing, up toward the room where he had seen his mistress carried.

INSIDE, Brown worked swiftly. He tossed the girl on the bed. She made no attempt to rise, but lay still, panting with fright. Her wide eyes were on him. Brown pushed the bolt into place quickly. He looked around. There were three heavy chairs near the window. He ran for them, aware of the powerful thud of a body against the door. There was no moment to be wasted. They were outside now, battering and pounding on the heavy

panel. Thank God the place was built like a fortress.

Perspiration stood out on his face. He managed the first chair and brought the others, piling them solidly against the door. He found a marble topped table and added its weight to the pile.

That would do for the time, if he could work swiftly.

The bag was on the bed beside the girl. He opened it quickly, evading her eyes. There was a combined fear and hope in her expression. Either she was playing a game with him, or her trust was born of deep unreasoning love.

She saw the slim, surgical knife as he drew it from the bag, and a low moan escaped her lips.

"No! You can't."

He ignored her. From a small bottle, he poured ether on a bit of gauze. She did not fight him now, but lay still as he pressed it to her nostrils.

The noise outside was deafening. They had come from all over the Hall. They were forcing the door in slowly. The first chair left the top of the pile and clattered heavily to the floor.

The girl was asleep, breathing normally, her body relaxed. He was afraid he would hurt her. He bent over, his ear close to her lips. She was out of all reach of pain.

"*Frances*," he said sharply. No answer. "*Frances, before God, if I fail, know that I did this for your sake!*"

The knife was in his hand, slim and glittering in the light of the lamp. He turned her over gently. Where the wings met her body, there was a large bony hump.

Philip Brown's lips were moving soundlessly. Sweat glistened on his face, but his fingers were steady as rock.

The knife swooped downward.

A moment later, the door caved in

under the force from outside and the chairs and table were swept aside. Brown turned quickly, the knife held before him as a weapon in his left hand. His right searched for, and found, the automatic. It spoke twice in rapid succession and the first two creatures went down.

Monk, the leg of a chair raised high over his head, evil, white eyes staring straight ahead, closed in. He ignored the knife and the gun. Monk wanted to kill—kill the man who had taken their mistress from them.

Brown squeezed the trigger once more and the hammer snapped on an empty chamber. A scream of triumph escaped Monk's thin lips, and he swept forward toward the slim, bloody blade of the surgical knife.

CHAPTER XIII

A Noose for Quantry

THADDIUS QUANTRY was worried. If he had come to Brewster Hall alone, he could have faced the situation more calmly. Phyllis had insisted on being with him. They heard the bedlam of sound inside. They waited together for some time on the porch. Then the old man turned to his daughter.

"I don't like it," he said sourly. "Philip has been away for some time. That noise in there sounds as though they mean business. I think you'd better go home. I'll find out what's wrong."

The girl faced him defiantly.

"I'm not moving until that door opens," she said. "Dad, I've been worried for months about you. There's more in Brewster Hall than you've told me. I'm going to see it through."

He cursed himself for letting her come. The girl was stubborn but she

could not be blamed. Her interest was in him alone.

He applied his hand to the knocker, this time rattling it furiously. Foot-steps sounded close to the door. It came open quickly. Quantry was startled, but he had seen this creature before. To Phyllis, the sudden appearance of a great, bow-legged ape with unseeing white eyes was too much. Her hand swept to her mouth to suppress a scream of terror.

"Dad . . . !"

He took her arm quickly, digging his fingers into the soft flesh until the pain brought her to her senses.

"I told you not to come," he said. "Now you'll have to face what I've been facing. You'll have to understand what I'm fighting against."

Had he known what he was facing at this moment, Thaddius Quantry would have turned and fled into the night. Instead, he pushed the girl through the door and followed her. The ape didn't make a sound. As though disinterested in them both, he turned and lumbered away toward the stairs. Not so the remainder of the fiends who milled around in the great hall.

Quantry saw one of the hooded monks point an accusing finger toward him. Three huge-eared, sinewy men left the monk's side and ambled lazily toward them. Something was afoot.

He had been here often and he had treated these creatures for injuries. He thought he had control over them. Now he knew better. They waited, and Phyllis Quantry's eyes were dull with shock. They were seeing things that her mind would not grasp. She stood near him, her hand clutched in his, wondering when the horrible nightmare would end. That it might be real did not enter her mind.

"Dad," she whispered again. "Dad,

it's not true."

Quantry could not hear her. He knew that the door to a room on the second floor had been thrown open and that the stairs were covered with all manner of horrible shapes, trying to force their way into that room. He had no time to wonder why.

The three huge-eared men were near them now, closing in cautiously as though unsure of themselves. The monk shouted something loud and strange at them. They sprang forward. Quantry turned and dashed toward the door, dragging the girl with him.

EVENTS piled up with tragic swift-ness. He was aware of a sudden jerk on his shoulder and he spun around, losing his hold on Phyllis. His face was close to vacant eyes leering into his. He screamed hoarsely and heard Phyllis' breath coming in tight, frightened gasps. Two had him between them; the other two were dragging the girl across the tile toward the end of the hall.

He struggled, but it was useless. The others were closing in.

That crazy, meaningless struggle was still going on at the top of the stairs.

He heard the single word go up from many throats.

"*Traitor! Traitor!*"

They moved about him and he was propelled swiftly toward the lifeless figures that still dangled from the beams.

"*Traitor! Traitor!*"

His heart pounded heavily and his body was soaking wet. He tried to jerk away and they tossed a noose around his neck. Somewhere, far away, he heard Phyllis utter one shrill, sickening scream.

"My daughter . . ." He felt his throat contract under the force of the

rope. "By the Power of God, you can't . . ."

The rope jerked tightly around his neck and his voice was cut off abruptly. He fainted.

Phyllis Quantry lived those terrible moments in a reeling nightmare of fear. Her arms were almost torn loose as they dragged her into the dining room.

She could feel them pressing in tightly, a maddened mob. She was lifted and tossed onto the center of the table. Faces—dull, terrible faces close to hers, staring at her as she lay prone across the smooth surface. Her hand felt something moist on the table top and she lifted it and looked at her fingers. They were covered with blood. She was lying on a grim, blood-covered sacrificial table.

She uttered one heart-shaking scream, sobbed loudly, and knew no more.

CHAPTER XIV

Power of Evil

AT THE moment that Monk plunged forward toward Philip Brown, the young doctor whirled to face him, the knife in his hand raised to ward off the attack.

Monk was only the first. The place was alive with followers, ready to murder him brutally if Monk failed. The white eyes, the evil, contorted face was close to him.

The room was suddenly silent. So utterly silent that Philip Brown did not for the moment realize its significance. He turned and stared at the still, pale figure on the bed. He could see her breasts rise and fall slightly.

The wings.

He had severed them neatly with one clean sweep of the knife. They had fallen across the bed. Now they were no longer fully spread, but had shrunk to two mummy-like bits of

brown flesh. They were all that remained of the strength and power that had caused Frances Brewster to lead the forces of evil.

Monk couldn't grasp it. He couldn't understand, in his dull, listless mind, that the girl he had depended on was no more.

Brown watched with narrowed eyes, wondering what the other's reaction would be.

To his surprise, Monk moved slowly toward the door, pushing the creatures before him. The house was silent. From below, no sound came to disturb the scene in the bedroom.

Monk went to the top of the stairs. He stood on the topmost step, staring down at the frightened, distorted faces below him. He held the rail for support, tottering slightly.

"*She—is—dead,*" Monk spoke slowly, distinctly. "*The time must be postponed.*"

He toppled forward slowly, held grimly to the rail and then his fingers lost their grip and he fell forward into the crowd below. A sudden chattering of sound went up. The sound of lost men, fighting for something they could not retain. The ghastly, unhappy howl of the dead.

BEFORE Philip Brown's eyes, the assemblage broke up as the creatures lost their slight hold on reason and rushed toward the doors and windows of Brewster Hall. He stood there watching Blackfen Moor swallow up the gruesome horde. Then the Hall was empty. The room below was a shell again. He heard a groan near the bottom of the stairs and went down quickly.

Doctor Quantry was lying on his back, his eyes closed. Phyllis was kneeling at the old man's side. Her clothes were torn and blood streaked

her arms and face. She lifted Quarry's head to her lap and rocked it gently.

Brown hesitated, then turned slowly back to the room upstairs. Frances Brewster was lying on her back, staring at the high ceiling with wide, frightened eyes. As he came in, she turned quickly, flashing a startled look at his face. A quiet smile parted her lips and brightened her cheeks. She held out one hand and motioned weakly for him to come close.

For the first time his mind was at peace as he went to her. He sat on the edge of the bed, holding her hand tightly in his. For a long time neither of them spoke. She reached up and, putting a soft arm around his neck, drew his lips down to her own. The kiss was tender and full of wonder for what he had done.

"The power," she said falteringly. "It was in my wings. All my strength went into them. The strength of me, feeding evil until it could strike."

He held a finger lightly to her lips and nodded.

"I know," he said. "I guessed it because you protected them so carefully. Otherwise you are normal. It is better not to try to explain or justify what happened."

"I'm—I'm all right now," she said. "I hope I never . . ."

He smiled.

"We can't fight the evil of Blackfen Moor," he said. "But together we can evade it. We'll go to London soon, and start all over again."

"I'm glad you understand and love me," she said, and her voice quavered strangely. "If you hadn't succeeded I would go on forever in the clutches of Satan."

He kissed her again.

"I said we would forget it," he said abruptly. "Brewster Hall will be closed. You'll have no memories."

She shuddered.

"I think you can make me forget," she said.

He picked her up carefully, covering her with a blanket from the bed. He carried her down the broad steps into the main hall. He wondered just how much he *could* forget.

Surely years would never dull the memory of Monk, tottering figure of the underworld, standing there at the head of the stairs.

"She is dead. The time must be postponed."

The time? When would it come? Who would lead in this war between hell and the earth?

The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

(Continued from page 8)

seems we had a story called "Appointment With The Past" (also by Yerxa) which was to be illustrated by a cover by James B. Settles. Strangely, Yerxa has never copped a cover. So, rather than cheat him out of his glory, we hastily switched covers at the last minute—because Settles was unable to finish the original cover due to the press of war work. Yes, artists are in great demand now that the army has taken so many of them from their studios. The result is the first half of the book had to go to press, and the cover story placed in the only position left for it! But what's the difference? We

hope we're giving you good stories from page one to page two-ten!

ALEXANDER BLADE recently witnessed a disastrous cyclone in Michigan, and was inspired to write a story about it. So before he left that section of the country, he wrote "Professor Cyclone" and used the Michigan storm scene in his story. So here's one with authentic background. You Michigan readers ought to recognize it.

ANOTHER character to come back to our pages is Elroy Arno's Willowby Jones. "Jones Buys War Bonds" this time.

"YOU Can Say That Again," says G. H. Irwin in his latest story. Well, we did, so read it for yourself, and then you can say it again! We hope you do!

THERE they are—ten great stories on the *Fantastic Adventures* stock pile this month. We'll be back again with more in the next issue, in spite of paper cuts. And thinking of that, we can hardly wait for war's end, because we're going to make up for lost time when that day comes! What a book you'll get then!

IT IS with great sorrow that we receive word of the death of one of the finest authors of fantasy. A. Merritt, author of such fine novels as "The Moon Pool", "The Snake Mother", "The Stone Face", and "Seven Footprints To Satan", died while vacationing at his summer home in Florida. Mr. Merritt was world-renowned as the editor of *The American Weekly*, to which he brought the very popular fantastic aspect of modern science and such subjects as ancient mysticism and unexplainable phenomena. The pages of fantasy magazines will miss his mystic writings.

IT IS fantastic, but true, that we cure human ills with poison. We read every day about the miracles produced by the sulfa drugs in curing patients who were doomed to death. But now we hear that sulfa drugs very often injure the patient's nervous system and that the safe limit in potency of the drugs may have already been reached.

According to Dr. Sam C. Little, of the University of Michigan Medical School, all the various sulfa drugs have some poisonous effect on the nervous system ranging from the parent substance which has the least effect down to some of the newer drugs that are more dangerous.

Some of the conditions already reported as being observed in patients treated with the sulfa drugs for various ailments are stammering, toxic psychosis, optic neuritis, loss of ability to speak and write, blindness and convulsions, and many other diseases of the nervous system. Moreover, doctors believe that in cases where the patient has already been afflicted with a disease of the nervous system the poisonous effect of the drugs are more likely to occur and are more pronounced.

There have been many theories advanced as to why the sulfa drugs have this effect on the nervous system and one of them that seems very logical is that the brain does not get sufficient oxygen when sulfa drugs are present in the body, since hemoglobin (the substance that carries oxygen in the blood) has a greater affinity for the sulfa drugs than it does for oxygen.

Of course, it is not to be interpreted that the sulfa drugs are all poisons and that their curative effect is all a myth. But too much reliance must not be placed on them and there is a limit to the potency in which they can be produced.

DR. KURT LANGE and Dr. Linn J. Boyd recently demonstrated at the New York Medical College, Flower and Fifth Avenue Hospital in

New York, a new type of test which can be used to indicate the speed with which a person's blood is flowing through his body. It is now known as a green-lips test and it requires that the patient have a dye called fluorescein injected into his veins. This dye gives off a greenish-yellow color when ultraviolet light is shined on it and thus the doctor can tell the speed with which the patient's blood is flowing through his body by the length of time it takes for his lips to turn green as ultra-violet light shines on them.

This test was originally developed by Dr. Lange and Dr. E. Wollheim in Germany, but it has been further improved since then. The test can also be adapted to tell doctors whether blood is circulating properly to any part of the patient's body. After injecting the dye into the patient's veins, the ultra violet light can be shined on any part of the body and the doctor can diagnose correctly whether the part is getting enough blood or whether it is dying.

Since the dye is perfectly safe, inexpensive and plentiful it may be used by army surgeons to test arms and legs of soldiers that are frozen or have become infected with gangrene. In this way, the surgeon may be able to save the soldier's life and still not have to amputate.

MOST of us know that the men who fly our Army and Navy war planes and serve as bombardiers, navigators, radio men, and gunners are all given extensive training to prepare them for any emergency. But did you know that the Army is giving its mechanics a special training course so that they will be on their toes every minute of the day or night?

One school of training is the United Air Lines' Boeing School of Aeronautics located at Oakland, California, where the mechanics are really put through their paces.

At moments when they are least expected, the "air raid" alarm is sounded and the mechanics turn out from hangars, barracks, social room, and shops to cover the training course built next to the school.

The course, which would give even our American Rangers or Marines a real workout, consists of scaling a seven-foot wall while running at full speed, hurdling a fence, crawling under barbed wire, getting through holes that are far from comfortable and running at full speed over a log that crosses a pit. The entire course is 100 yards long and has been purposely laid out on loose rock and sand surfaces to simulate actual conditions found on airfields over seas.

When the course is covered, the work first starts. The men are not permitted to stop even for one deep, relaxing breath but must immediately get busy covering those planes that will not go up and readying those that will go into battle.

Although the training may seem severe for men who remain on the ground, it will more than prove its worth in saving lives and minutes when they count most.

Rap.

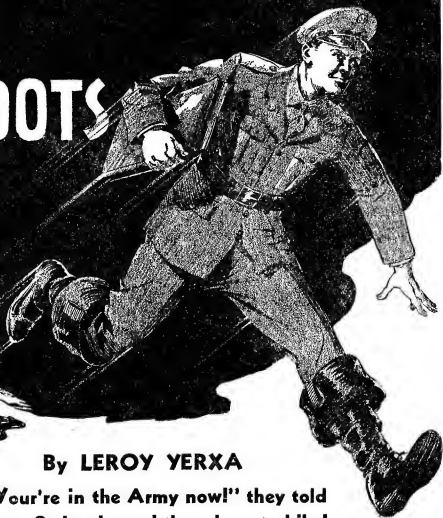
Freddie Funk's SEVEN LEAGUE



Julian Rappaport

As Freddie started for camp, a shot rang out from behind a rock

BOOTS



By LEROY YERXA

**"Your're in the Army now!" they told
Freddie. So he showed them how to hike!**

BUT hiking boots you asked for!" The little man with the huge paunch hunched his shoulders and threw his hands wide. "You're expecting patent-leather dancing shoes, maybe?"

Freddie Funk considered that. True enough, he had asked the shoe salesman for hiking boots, but such boots as these he had never seen before. To begin with, the shop itself was built along Vic-

torian lines. The room was tiny, wedged between two modern stores. The boxes were piled to the ceiling, and looked as though they hadn't been opened for at least a hundred years. The owner, even now growing more impatient, wore a leather apron and had a thick growth of beard on his heavy chin.

"But aren't these a little frayed?" Freddie surveyed the cuban-heeled,

black-leather objects that the salesman had wedged his feet into.

"They look like something Captain Kidd had worn through several battles and discarded after all hope for them was gone."

"Frayed?" The shoe man glared at him. "Frayed, is it? Them boots got years of wear in 'em yet. Don't make 'em like that today. Notice the fine leather—the hand workmanship."

"Uhuh," Freddie said doubtfully. "Well, if you think . . ."

"Think? Say, I can promise you there isn't another pair like 'em in town. Take my word for it."

Freddie Funk smiled wanly.

"I—I guess you're right," he agreed. "How much?"

How much? What more pleasant words could be spoken? The shoe man assumed the attitude of a person about to give something away.

"Ten bucks."

"Oh, no!" Freddie started to pull the right boot off. "I really couldn't."

"Wait a minute."

"But really."

Freddie, still struggling with the tight boot, stopped to catch his breath.

"Five bucks."

Freddie went to work again, but the heel had caught solidly, and if the boot came, half of his heel threatened to come with it.

"I got three dollars," he said. "That's all I planned . . ."

The shoe man groaned. He seemed troubled by many pains. He moaned, rolled his fat head dolefully from side to side, moaned again and gave up.

"Three bucks—cash. I'm giving . . ."

"I know," Freddie agreed. "You're giving them away."

He found three badly crumpled bills in his pocket, handed them over, and picked up his old shoes.

"You're going to wear the boots?"

Freddie grinned.

"I haven't any choice," he said. "I can't get them off."

He remained seated until his old shoes were returned wrapped in an old newspaper. Then he stood up. The shoe man walked quickly to the door and held it open, wide. Freddie turned, took a last, doubtful look at his purchase and stepped toward the door.

SWOOSH!

Freddie had taken that first step with the beginning of a tune on his lips. The song was wrenched rudely away. He felt a horrible blurring of everything in sight. The shoe store was gone. The sidewalk was gone. With one step he whirled through space, his breath lost, his clothing almost torn from his back.

The city was gone also.

One step from the chair in the old shoe shop had whipped Freddie Funk away from the city, away from every familiar spot, and dropped him in the center of a pasture.

He stood very still, trying to adjust himself to these new surroundings. It was the country all right. Fifty feet away from him, a large cow looked up with puzzled brown eyes, switched her tail and resumed her task of consuming grass. Across the field a farmer worked industriously, driving a tractor up and down a plowed field. Two crows wheeled over head and left for points west. Stark terror resounded in their raucous calls. They had suddenly been thrown into flight by a scarecrow who had popped up on them from nowhere.

Freddie Funk's breath finally slowed to normal. Damned if he'd let this sudden change lick him. Too many such things had already happened to Freddie. He'd have to take it calmly—figure it out.

Stand still and figure it out.

That was advice easily given, but, like a large pill, hard to take. Freddie knew two things. A moment ago he was in the shoe shop. Now he was in the country, miles from home.

But how?

Freddie started to whistle softly. He looked down at the boots. The high tops flopped lazily about his legs. He whistled louder, but the cow wouldn't look up again. No one seemed interested.

"This is silly," he said aloud.

Then, hoping his own speed would outwit any strange power that hung over him, Freddie started to walk rapidly toward the farmer on the tractor.

That is, he thought he was walking. Five steps—that was all.

S-w-o-o-o-s-h!

Freddie felt the wind go out of him as though someone had hit him below the ribs. His clothing whipped against his body and he was aware of the feeling a dive-bomber must have when it goes in for the kill. The scenery flashed past him as though the world had suddenly increased its speed and was rolling around under triple power.

Freddie hit the ground and sat down—hard.

He caught his breath, felt of his arms and legs and decided that none of them was broken.

He looked bewildered.

"But, I'm *not* drunk," he said. "I'll swear I'm not drunk."

"You may not be drunk, boy," a voice behind him said. "But, by tunket, you're the fastest thing I ever seen on two legs—or four, for that matter."

Freddie climbed uncertainly to his feet and looked around. An old man, well-hidden by chin shrubbery and made conspicuous by a bulbous, red nose, was staring at him from over a white picket fence.

"Never seen nothing like it." The old boy shook his head from side to side. "One minute you wuzn't, then you wuz."

FREDDIE stared beyond the old man, saw a little white cottage with green shutters. Near him was another house, and across the street a whole row of modest, shingled cottages. He had evidently landed in the center of someone's victory garden. He had plowed a furrow into a row of newly arisen radish tops. His feet—in fact, his legs—were covered with rich loam and bits of radish tops.

"Jerusalem!" The old man was still ogling him. "Me staring at Bill's radish strip, then like a whirlwind, you landing right in the middle of it."

Freddie stood very still. He didn't dare take another step. It was beginning to dawn on him. Whatever power he had—and he didn't understand it clearly—made every step he took stretch itself into unbelievably long proportions. In five steps he had come miles.

"I'm—I'm practicing for the broad jump," he said lamely. "I cleared that fence nicely, didn't I?"

He brushed curly, very damp hair out of his eyes and waited. The old man chuckled and inserted an old pipe between his teeth.

"Son, you oughta take up flying. I don't know where you started that jump from, but you better get out of Bill's radishes and over to my side of the fence. I'm afraid he wouldn't understand."

Freddie didn't dare take another step. He sat down abruptly, grasped his right boot with both hands and started to tug. The boot came off and two or three inches of skin came with it. Trying to act as though going barefooted was old stuff with him, he re-

moved the other boot, climbed the fence and sat down in the grass under a tree. The old man walked over and sat down beside him.

"Darned hot day, ain't it?"

Freddie nodded. He wanted to ask where he was. Wanted to tell some one what had happened, but he didn't dare. The twinkle in his bewhiskered friend's eyes told him that the old gent didn't believe his story. He couldn't very well improve on it.

"Supposing I get a gallon of cider and we'll freshen up," the old gent suggested. "My name's Walker—Hi Walker."

"Freddie Funk," Freddie said. "Pleased to meet you."

Walker chuckled.

"Glad you dropped in," he said. "And believe me, you sure did."

"Huh?" Freddie was alarmed.

"Forget it," Walker said. "Guess you boys got a lot of secret weapons figured out to win this war. An old geezer like me ain't got any right asking . . ."

"Oh. But it's not a secret. . . ."

"Forget it," Walker said gruffly. "Now, about that cider . . ."

FREDDIE watched Hi Walker as he went into the cottage and came out with a jug of cider and a pan of doughnuts. He accepted a glass of the cold liquid, ate half a dozen doughnuts, and leaned back against the tree. The boots were on the turf beside him. He watched them with narrowed, suspicious eyes.

Walker finally broke the silence.

"Course, I suppose you army fellows got secrets," he said plaintively. "Just the same, I'm an old man and I'm a good American. If you told me how you managed to fly like that, without wings or nothing, I could keep a secret."

Freddie sat up.

"Fly?"

Walker grinned and the pipe wobbled in his mouth.

"I wasn't born yesterday, son," he said. "Nor the day before, for that matter. When I see a man comin' through the air like you did, it don't take me long to figure you're one of them inventor fellers. Secret traps to lick the Japs, so to speak."

Freddie gulped. "Coming through the air?"

Walker's eyes started to kindle angrily.

"If you don't want to tell, ain't no way I can make you."

Freddie Funk never wanted to tell anything so badly in his life.

"I'm—I'm not an inventor," he said. "I'll try to explain . . ."

He did. He told his whole story, from the time he went in to purchase the boots.

"And," he finished, "it must be the boots. There's no other explanation."

Hi Walker gulped the last of the cider, studied Freddie's face for some time, then looked very solemn.

"I guess you ain't crazy," he said.

"I wasn't an hour ago," Freddie admitted uncertainly. "Now, I'm not exactly sure."

Walker picked up the boots, held them well away from him and studied the cut of the leather carefully. The pipe dropped from his teeth and his lips tightened into a narrow line.

"You ever hear of the seven league boots?" he asked finally.

"Seven league boots? But surely, you can't mean . . ."

Walker nodded quickly.

"Exactly what I'm meaning," he admitted. "Durned if I know where they come from, but seven league boots ain't no dream. If they was written about a few hundred years ago, why didn't they exist? What's to prevent these from being the original pair?"

"Seven league boots," Freddie said again, thoughtfully. "Say, how far am I from the city?"

"About one hundred and twenty-five miles," Hi Walker said slowly. "As the crow flies."

Freddie did a little rapid calculation, and a whistle escaped his pursed lips.

"And a league is about three miles," he said. "I took six steps."

"Six steps, at seven leagues a step, makes exactly one hundred and twenty-six—say . . ."

"By golly, old timer!" Freddie jumped to his feet. "I think you're right."

THEN his smile vanished. Over a hundred miles from home—broke—and he didn't dare put the boots back on. One hundred and twenty-six miles, barefooted.

"What you gonna do with these things?" Hi Walker's smile had suddenly become cunning. "They ain't no good to you."

Freddie hesitated, and Walker went on, talking rapidly.

"I always wanted to own something special like this. Tell you what, I'll give you ten dollars . . ."

Freddie Funk felt a strange stubbornness within him. He didn't know what he wanted the boots for, but he *didn't* want to sell them.

"No," he said.

"But they ain't any good." Walker stood up, still holding onto the boots. "Fifteen bucks."

"No," Freddie said. "Maybe you could lend me bus fare."

Hi Walker grinned triumphantly.

"Sure," he reached into his pocket and drew out a five-dollar bill. "And you leave the boots with me."

Freddie had lost all gratitude for Hi Walker's hospitality. He wanted more than ever to keep the magic boots. They

were his. He had bought them and had a receipt for them.

"I'll—I'll take a chance on getting home without the bus," he said. "Give them to me."

Walker backed away from him slowly, the grin gone, his whiskered face almost hiding narrowed cunning eyes.

"I got 'em," he said. "You start a fight and I'll tell Bill you wrecked his garden."

Freddie was mad now. Plenty mad.

He swooped forward suddenly, grabbed the boots and sent Walker spinning to the grass.

"You go to hell," Freddie said angrily. "And tell Bill his radishes can go there too."

He started walking toward the front gate.

Over a hundred miles from home, he kept thinking, and he was barefooted.

THE sign on the glass paneled door said:

SELECTIVE SERVICE—LOCAL BOARD NUMBER 26

Freddie Funk sighed, looked down at the envelope in his hand and opened the door. There were half a dozen desks inside and as many clerks. The clerks stared at Freddie. One man, with a green eye-shade over dark, penetrating eyes, motioned a finger toward Freddie.

"This way, little man," he said. "We've been waiting for you."

"Waiting?" Freddie walked toward the green eye-shade.

"Your name's Funk, ain't it?" was the retort.

Freddie nodded.

"But I was out of town," he pleaded. "I couldn't . . ."

Six pairs of accusing eyes turned upon him. The green eye-shade slipped

back, revealing an angry face.

"You were out of town," the clerk said sarcastically. "Out of a hundred men called from this section, ninety-nine appeared. *You were out of town.*"

Freddie handed the letter over carefully. He remembered the contents word for word. Remembered finding the letter after he had completed the barefooted trek across the State of Illinois.

"I'm—I'm sorry," he gulped.

The man with the green eye-shade grasped the letter and ripped the contents from the envelope.

"Mr. Funk is sorry he didn't appear," he snarled. "Are you sorry you didn't notify us that you planned to be out of town?"

Freddie started to murmur something about the trip being unexpected. He didn't have time to finish it.

"We've saved a very nice spot for you, Mr. Funk," the clerk said soothingly. "Uncle Sam felt you were worth waiting for. You will report at Camp Blitz induction center tomorrow at ten for your physical. Don't bring along any more alibis, either, Funk. You're practically in the army, now."

"Yes, sir," Freddie said humbly. "I'm . . ."

The green eye-shade wagged up and down impatiently.

"Yes, we know. You're sorry. We heard that before. You're going to like the branch of the army we think you're going into, Funk. You'll be taking lots of trips."

"I'll—I'll do my best," Freddie said.

The green eye-shade rocked up and down gently.

"Sure you will, Funk. You'll have a splendid opportunity to travel from now on, on both feet. We understand you're going into the government's best-loved division. Hiker's paradise—the infantry!"

Freddie stared down at the new shoes that covered two blistered, peeling feet. A groan of reproach escaped his lips. He turned and without further words, staggered toward the door.

"T^ENSHUN!"

Freddie Funk stiffened, stared down at the fresh khaki shirt, the well-pressed army pants and the heavy brown G. I. shoes. It had been like this for some hours now. The marching wasn't so bad. It was the distance they marched.

"Forward march!"

Freddie took three steps forward and fell flat on his face.

"Halt!"

The column stopped, and a big, muscle-clad sergeant came toward Freddie. Funk got to his feet quickly, stiffened and waited for the blow.

The sergeant halted at Freddie Funk's side.

"Well, well," he said in a low-throated purr, "if it ain't 'I'm sorry' Funk again. What's the trouble *this* time, Private Funk?"

Freddie was silent. He had no words to match his mood.

"Private Funk," Sergeant Waldron started gently, "this is the third time this week you have taken it upon yourself to initiate new drills. When I say 'forward march,' I do *not* mean to lie down for a rest."

"Yes, sir," Freddie managed.

"For once, Funk," the sergeant roared, "I'm tired of you and your sore feet. I can't run a drill on sore feet. Fall out and see the medico."

"Yes, sir." Freddie fell out literally. He meant to turn stiffly and march away. His left foot got in the way of his right and he went down again, full length. Sergeant Waldron backed away, waited for Funk to rise, and sent a parting retort after him.

"Don't trip over the doctor, Funk. He's not as patient as I am."

"Yes, sir," Freddie said over his shoulder. "That is—I mean, no, sir."

"**C**ORNS," the doctor said. "Such corns I've never seen."

He raised his head from a scrutiny of Freddie Funk's feet, and stared balefully into Freddie's eyes.

"How the hell did you *get* such corns?"

Freddie sighed.

"I walked a hundred miles barefoot," he said, then held his breath.

The doctor seemed about to explode.

"If you think that's funny . . . !

"No, sir," Freddie mumbled. "Hon-est I did."

The doctor shook his head again, started putting little gadgets back into his bag and stood up.

"You stay in bed today," he said with a suspicious look in his eye. "I'm afraid this case goes beyond me."

"Yes, sir," Freddie said. "I—I wonder if I could see the general?"

The doctor, about to walk away, turned and placed both hands carefully on his hips.

"But certainly, Private Funk," he said. "General Lipstead sees all privates between the hours of three and five in the afternoon. He likes to talk over their little problems. Just call him for an appointment."

Freddie stared at him.

"I'm not being funny," he pleaded. "The general might understand."

The doctor groaned, his arms falling to his side.

"I'm sure he would," he said softly, as though not quite trusting himself to say more. "Yes, I'm sure he would."

FOR a long time after the doctor had gone, Freddie Funk lay on his cot staring at the ceiling. It wasn't that

he minded being in the army. Private Funk had a nice sound to it. At least he was trying to do his part.

If it hadn't been for those damned boots. It had taken him days to walk home after being stranded in Bill's radish patch. A barefooted man carrying boots in his hands had little chance of hitching a ride. The longer he walked the worse he looked. The worse he looked, the faster people passed him on the highway.

That had been the start of it all. Now, in the army and drilling every day, the crop of corns he had harvested on that long trek was playing hob with him.

Bitterly, Freddie remembered each time his tired, almost useless feet had betrayed him.

He leaned over the edge of the cot, opened his locker and drew out the seven league boots. They looked innocent, dusty and very commonplace. He put them on the cot and stared at them. Gradually an overpowering curiosity awakened within Freddie Funk. Perhaps something else had been the source of his strange trip. Yet, if the boots *were* powerful enough to take him twenty-one miles at a hop, why wasn't this the time to take advantage of it? Why, in the army, wasn't he in a perfect position to use them?

Freddie sat up. A smile lighted his face. He started to whistle softly. Tomorrow the whole camp was going to start a long march to Tennessee. A hundred and fifty miles, marching through rain or shine, to the border and back again.

Freddie Funk thought of Sergeant Waldron's quick tongue and grinned. When the remainder of the boys came in after long hours of drilling, Freddie Funk was propped up in bed, whistling. His feet felt a lot better. Better than they had felt in months.

"THE men who have to fall out will be picked up by the trucks," Sergeant Waldron was explaining to the long line of men. "However, any man who gets a ride will have to show me that his feet are worn down to the knees. There ain't gonna be no slackers, understand?"

He stared deliberately at Private Funk and Funk smiled back. The smile was very disarming. Freddie was thinking of the pair of seven league boots that were now packed snugly in the top of his knapsack.

The long line of men, trucks and equipment pulled out of Camp Blitz on schedule. It wound down the highway, across the big bridge and straggled out across farm country. Sergeant Waldron marched at the head of his squad, head up. *His* feet weren't hurting *him*!

Then it started to rain. The road changed to mud. The trucks snarled and tore their way through the ever-thickening ooze. The men bogged down behind the trucks, slogging along with heads down against the rain.

FREDDIE FUNK waited until each man's problem of locomotion became his own. Then Private Funk dropped out of line and slipped behind a tree at the edge of the road. Somewhat frightened by the thing he was about to do, he slipped out of the mud-crusted G.I. shoes. He dug hurriedly into the pack and found his seven league boots. The marchers were beyond him now. Trucks were coming up. Rear-guard men were combing the edge of the road, picking up stragglers.

Freddie slipped into the boots hurriedly and stood up. He took a firm grip on his army shoes, made sure the pack was safe on his back, and faced the Tennessee line.

He took a step

Rain lashed against his face powerfully and a few branches slapped him as he moved. The landscape whipped past, changed abruptly and he was standing in the middle of a rain-swept, empty road.

There was a gasoline station beside the road, but the rain had driven everyone indoors. No one had seen Freddie drop in. He went across the road, slipped a nickel into a coke machine and drew out a bottle. Then he dropped behind a nearby tree, changed his shoes, took a sip of the soft drink and fell into a dreamless sleep.

When he awakened, he was aware of marching feet. The rain had stopped; sun bathed the road. Dust flew up about everything and his first glimpse of the marching troop reminded him of doughnuts that had been dusted in powdered sugar.

He found his own squad, waited until most of them had passed, then fell in. They marched for another twenty minutes, then the command was given to fall out.

Sergeant Waldron came upon Private Funk as Funk settled himself comfortably with his back to an elm tree. The sergeant's eyes popped out.

"Private Funk!" he said in amazement. "I thought we lost you back at the camp. You didn't actually *march* all this distance?"

Freddie looked hurt.

"I'm doing my best," he said.

Several of the men turned toward the sergeant. They admired Funk for sticking it out. They didn't like Waldron too well, anyhow. Waldron tensed.

"Good work, Funk," he said abruptly. "Keep 'em marching."

He turned stiffly and walked away.

AND so to Tennessee—and—back went Freddie and his seven league

boots. If anyone noticed that he was missing during the day, his freshness and good spirits each night made up for mild suspicions.

If you didn't see a man during the day, that was no sign he didn't get out of line a little. The fact that he made the grade—marched every inch of those dirty, wearying miles, made Freddie Funk and his corns something of a noble figure.

It was the last leg of the march. Forty miles ahead was Camp Blitz and a bunk to sleep in. The troops were lined up for the morning march. Instructions came down the line.

"The first ten men to reach the camp will receive awards for their stamina," Sergeant Waldron read from the notice. "From here on, it's every man for himself. You know the cross-country route. No holds barred. Get going when they blow the whistle, and I hope at least one man in my outfit can take one of them awards."

Unfortunately, Freddie did not hear these instructions. He had already retreated behind a nearby tree and was donning his seven league boots. When the whistle blew and hundreds of uniformed men suddenly started to run, Freddie wondered what had happened.

He knew they couldn't possibly run all the way to Camp Blitz. Perhaps it was a new kind of cross-country race.

Freddie donned the boots and took his step. Twenty-one miles ahead of the troops and nothing to do through the long, sunlit hours. He started to think of the cot at the empty barracks. Surely he could sneak in and hide in a comfortable place. He'd have a fine chance to make up his sleep.

Without hesitation, Freddie Funk took another twenty-one mile stride and landed at the edge of the camp. He entered his own barracks and in half

an hour was tucked in for a long rest.

THAT was where they found him. That is, Sergeant Waldron found him.

Waldron had run his head off for the first hour, settled down to a dog-trot and camped that night about half way to Blitz. Now he was entering Blitz on the second day, not a winner, but at least among the first hundred soldiers to return.

He came into the barracks, planning on stealing forty winks before he was needed, and saw Freddie Funk snoozing comfortably on his cot.

"Funk?"

Freddie opened his eyes and stared up at the Sergeant. He sat up hurriedly.

"Yes, sir."

Waldron's face was wreathed in smiles.

"Private Funk, am I to understand that you've been here for some time?"

Freddie managed to get into his pants.

"Yes, sir, I think I was the first one, sir."

"*The first?*" An incredulous look fanned over Waldron's face. "You've reported to the headquarters?"

Funk's face was a blank.

"No, sir, was I supposed . . . ?"

Waldron grasped him firmly by the wrist and dragged him off the cot.

"Man, you're the fastest soldier in this camp. You win first place in a cross-country race, and then go to sleep and forget about it. Such modesty."

"Yes, sir," Freddie mumbled. He wished the Sergeant would let go of him so he could go back and put his shirt on. "I didn't know . . ."

Waldron kept right on dragging him outside—then across the camp toward headquarters.

"I know," he said. "Say no more."

Modesty is fine stuff, but not when you've accomplished a feat like this. Modesty, hell. We're taking you in for that award."

"Yes, sir." Freddie wondered who was getting the award, he or Sergeant Waldron.

"PRIVATE FUNK! Private Funk!"

Freddie was conscious of a hand shaking his shoulder. He turned over, groaned and saw the tense features of Sergeant Waldron staring down at him in the semi-darkness of the barracks. The sergeant was fully dressed and seemed excited.

"Funk—turn out and get dressed on the double. Special job came up for you. Chance for a promotion."

Freddie didn't care much for promotions or anything else at that moment. It couldn't be much past two in the morning, and he had just turned in a few hours back. He wanted sleep.

"Uhuh," he said, and explored the cold floor with one toe. It wasn't bad, so he stood up slowly, yawning and stretching both arms above his tousled head. He tried to smooth the curly hair but it persisted in sticking straight out.

"Meet me outside," the sergeant ordered. "Dress quickly and don't disturb the men."

Funk was dressing as the sergeant moved silently toward the door. Freddie wondered if Waldron had another gag for him, maybe shoveling out the stables, or something just as pleasant.

Dressed, or at least partially so, he stumbled toward the door. The sharp night air hit him in the face, awakening him fully. The sergeant was pacing up and down, a cigarette clenched tightly in his lips.

"That you, Funk?" He strained his eyes in the uncertain light.

"Yes, sir," Freddie said. "I'm ready, sir."

"Good; follow me."

Sergeant Waldron struck off across the parade ground in the direction of headquarters. For the first time, Freddie noticed lights burning in the big hall that housed the offices. Cars were moving swiftly in and out of the drive. Men were standing in groups, talking excitedly.

Sergeant Waldron ignored them and led the way directly into the building. He spoke to an orderly at the door.

"Sergeant Waldron and Private Funk. Tell the general we are here."

There was a hurried, masterful touch in Waldron's voice that started Freddie wondering. Then they were to see General Lipstead himself?

The orderly left them, but returned almost at once.

"The general is waiting, sir," he said. "Follow me, please."

They went down a long hall, stopped before a door. The orderly knocked and went in.

"Sergeant Waldron and Private Funk," he said and held the door open. Waldron practically pushed Freddie through the door. Funk's eyes widened. There were at least a dozen privates lined up before the general's desk. Lipstead nodded to Waldron.

"Thank you, Sergeant. You may go now."

Waldron was disappointed. He hesitated, then stammered a hurried, "Yes, sir."

He went out.

The general, heavy set, keen-eyed with bushy eyebrows, stared at the row of privates before him.

"Men," he said, "no one outside this room knows why you are here. I have an important mission for you all. Perhaps you remember that a few days ago we held a cross-country-race to determine which men were best fitted to take care of themselves while traveling

alone and on foot across country.

"Now, quite unexpectedly, a terrible thing has happened. A problem that can only be solved by men such as the first ten or twelve winners of that cross-country race."

Freddie chanced a quick look up the line of men. Sure enough, they were the same ones who had received awards for the race. He, Freddie, had been the first-place winner.

Lipstead went on quietly:

"Last night, on the slopes of Mount Arnet, an army bomber got lost in the fog and crashed."

Low exclamations came from the men.

"On board that plane were complete plans for an invasion of enemy territory. They were being flown to Washington by General Walsher of San Francisco. I don't have to tell you that it would take months of work to duplicate those plans. We are sure that Axis agents are already on their way up Mount Arnet after those plans. Our only chance is to beat them to the wreck."

He paused to let his words sink in, then continued.

"We cannot come within fifty miles of the plane by car. We can drop men by parachute, but even then, they will be several miles from the scene of the crash. It calls for men fast on their feet and ready to face death for their country. It's a real wartime service. Who will volunteer?"

Every man in the line took one step forward.

"Good." Lipstead stood up. "Prepare with light pack, take emergency rations and be ready in front of the office in ten minutes. Dismissed."

PRIVATE FREDDIE FUNK took one look at the parachute as they strapped it on his back, then looked

away and tried to forget it.

There were eleven privates in the transport beside himself. They had been in the air for an hour. Mt. Arnet was but a few miles ahead. High in the air, it was icy cold. Freddie felt in his pack to make sure the seven league boots were there. He had packed them carefully just before he left.

"When you are pushed from the plane, count three and pull the ring. Then hold on. It won't hurt much if you flex your knees and roll when you land." The tough sergeant was standing near the door of the plane. "I know you guys never made a jump, and don't think I ain't giving you credit for guts. This is a tough assignment, and I hope one of you gets the General's handshake for it. Now! Are you ready?"

Freddie saw the rest of the group stand up, and followed their example.

"Remember, you're landing in a valley just south of the place where the bomber went down. Head due north and keep climbing. Good luck! You'll need it!"

Private Funk didn't remember much after that. He was sixth in line. His precious boots were wedged between the chute and his back. He felt the sergeant's hand on his shoulder, fell into space, waited an instant and then pulled the ring. For a while he seemed to topple through space—black space—then something jerked him upward and the chute was open in a white umbrella over his head.

It wasn't half bad. The long drift down—vague shapes below that grew into trees and hills and ravines—the sudden hard jolt of landing and being thrown forward on his face.

Freddie managed to release himself from the chute. He sat down and put his boots on hurriedly. Then, facing north, he took a single step.

W-o-o-s-h!

The ground had changed under him. He had been standing in an open spot, covered with pine needles. Now, his legs were buried to the knees in deep snow. He had come half-way up the side of Mount Arnet in a single step. The wind whipped around him, cutting to his shoulder blades. He stood, back to the wind, studying the sloping hillside. About a mile above him he could make out a blackened, hulking wreck against the gray cliff.

Would it be possible for him to take a step less than seven leagues in length? He had never tried.

He pushed one foot ahead of the other slightly, just a small movement. At once he saw that he had advanced perhaps a hundred yards from his last position. He tried again, lifting his right foot slowly and bringing it down a scant inch ahead of the other.

Crack!

"Ouch!"

Freddie fell forward on his face, turned and started to rub his foot. He had gone forward again, perhaps half a mile, and his foot had caught on a boulder, sending him down in the snow. He struggled to his feet. The plane was close.

He removed the boots and put his shoes on hurriedly.

With the boots slung over his shoulder, he went forward toward the plane.

NO ONE had reached it ahead of him. The bomber was crumpled up, props bent and twisted. The body of the plane looked as though it had been folded up by a giant.

Freddie tried not to notice the three burned, crushed objects that lay on the snow near the plane. He found the door to the cabin, wrenched it loose and entered the plane.

He must look for a heavy bag. A bag with the initials H.W.—General

Herbert Walsher.

Freddie struggled over the mess inside, reached the front end of the bomber and found a small, blackened briefcase. He turned it over eagerly. Under the blackened surface he could make out the silver initials, H.W.

Private Freddie Funk was very excited. He tumbled hurriedly out into the snow. Sitting down quickly, he donned the seven league boots. Not a moment too soon. As he arose, bag in hand, the head of a man came over a nearby rock.

"Hey, you! Wait a minute! I want . . ."

Freddie heard the voice, a very determined voice. He saw the stranger lift an object that looked like a revolver.

Freddie muttered a quick prayer, faced the general direction of Camp Blitz and took off.

He took off literally.

This time he was in a hurry and he took an extra long jump. The boots took the hint and sent him flying across the valley as though he were a human cannon ball. Freddie's breath was gone and his small pack was ripped from his back. He sat down by a small stream and regained his calm. Then, sure of his direction, he set off for Camp Blitz.

PRIVATE FREDDIE FUNK'S success story was short-lived. He was greeted by General Lipstead personally, though the general showed grave doubts over the length of time Funk had been away from camp. He placed the brief case on his desk, wiped away some of the charred leather and produced a key that unlocked the case. Holding it upside down, the General waited. Out popped a tooth-brush, towel, slavalug kit and an electric razor.

Lipstead, alone with Private Funk, raised his head slowly. His eyes were

red and they flashed with unholy fury.

"You!" He struggled to catch his breath. "You doddering nincompoop! You're the fastest man in the camp, all right. The fastest and the dumbest. Up the side of Mount Arnet you flash like a super-man, and you bring back General Walsher's personal toilet kit. By the gods, man, you'll get the guard-house for this!"

Freddie, sure that there had been only one bag, had brought the first one he had seen. The man in the fur cap would have long since found the other bag. The bag with the invasion plans.

"Maybe—could I please have another chance," he stammered. "I'm pretty sure I can find the right one."

Lipstead was growing more irate with the passing minutes.

"Chance?" he howled. "Thirty days chance to cool your heels and think this over! If the others can't reach that wreck in time, we've lost our chance. Why should you have another?" ..

Freddie couldn't think of a good answer to that, and anyhow it was too late. The door was already open. The orderly stood just outside.

Before he could make another plea, Private Funk was marching swiftly toward the guard house. He had a husky escort for a safe and speedy trip.

THE walls aren't really very thick, Freddie thought. He'd never get through the bars, or through the door. He still had the seven league boots, however, and if he stepped forward toward the wall, he was sure to go through. Twenty-one miles through.

He wondered vaguely if the shock of hitting that wall would kill him. Better off dead, he thought, than to be the laughing stock of the entire camp. Perhaps it would be worse than that. The general was pretty sore. Maybe he'd get court-martialed.

Freddie put the boots on. He stood close to the broad wall, picked up a heavy bench and held it firmly against him so that it covered him from head to foot. He took a long breath and a long step.

C-R-A-C-K.

Freddie saw stars by the dozen. He saw more stars than a movie fan in Hollywood. He felt the bench crush against his ribs, then something gave, and he was flying through space. He still held the bench in his hands when he stopped moving. He felt as though he had been taken apart like a Model T Ford and scattered out on the grass in small pieces. Sitting up carefully, he pushed the bench aside and examined himself. Outside of his general complexion, black and blue, he felt normal.

Private Funk wondered what they would think at Camp Blitz when they found the hole in the guard house wall.

Now he was the usual twenty-one mile step from the camp. The pasture around him was deserted and the night was cool. In the distance Mount Arnet stuck out of the general landscape like a sugar-coated cake.

Freddie, knowing that he must lose no time, planted one foot firmly ahead of the other and hurried toward the mountain. A half dozen steps brought him to the foothills of Mount Arnet.

He was in the middle of a heavy, pine-clad valley.

General Lipstead said the Nazi agents would probably drive to the foothills and hike to the wreck. If he knew the man in the fur cap, the Nazi would probably be in possession of invasion plans and half way down the mountains by now.

Freddie set out in the general direction of the wreck. His next move brought him whizzing in for a snowy landing at the same spot he had reached on his first journey.

He looked around carefully for some trace of the man with the fur cap. No one was in sight. The wreck, however, was in flames. The agents had found the plans and set the remainder of the plane on fire. It burned merrily, destroying every last trace of the enemy visit.

He must find a road below where the car was parked, then hurry down and wait.

He made out a small, winding strip of gravel, almost hidden among the pines. With a bound, Freddie was standing on its smooth surface.

Standing very still, he listened with every nerve in his body. The longer he waited the surer he was that a car was coming down the winding road above him. The road followed a deep canyon. Freddie waited. Sure enough, a closed motor car hurtled toward him. Funk, too angry now to be cautious, moved into the path of the oncoming automobile. He had forgotten that a step would carry him so far. Fortunately he shuffled forward, rather than jumped. The movement took him to a spot hardly twenty yards from the car. The driver lost his head, tried to avert the collision and twisted the wheel sharply to the right. Funk watched the car as it left the road and leaped over the edge of the cliff into the canyon below. It bounced once or twice, hit the valley floor and burst into flame.

He had to get that bag!

Freddie stepped gingerly after the car, felt the boots carry him downward swiftly and land him close to the burning wreck. He jerked off the boots, ran toward it and threw open the back door. There were two men in the front seat. They weren't a very pretty sight. Against the back window he could see a dark, scarred overnight bag. Breathlessly he lifted it out. Flames licked up and the boots, held

under one arm, caught fire.

Freddie fell back, flames narrowly missing his face. Frantically, he beat out most of the flames blazing along the boot tops, then slipped into them.

Freddie took a half dozen long, running strides. The remaining leather in the seven league boots had not lost its power. He felt himself lifted aloft; then pain, as the wind whipped into life the smouldering blaze around his legs, caused him to lose consciousness as he crashed to earth.

"LEAVE the kid alone." It was Sergeant Waldron's voice. "He'll be okay."

Freddie could hear a lot of other voices also, some of them far away, then close again, wavering with his own strength. He tried to move, groaned and fell back. The feel of fresh sheets. The warmth of a pillow. The last he remembered was his hurried exit from the canyon on Mount Arnet.

He opened his eyes, waited for the film to clear away, and saw that the doctor, Sergeant Waldron, General Lipstead and several officers were leaning over him. Lipstead's hand was on Freddie's arm.

"I hope you're feeling better, Corporal Funk?"

Freddie stared.

"Corporal?"

Lipstead smiled.

"After what you've done, I believe you're entitled to at least that much of a reward."

SERGEANT WALDRON chuckled. "Well, Funk, think you'll make a good non-com?"

Freddie nodded, too choked to speak aloud.

"What we can't figure out, Funk, is how you got burned so bad. One of the men found you lying out on the parade

ground. Your shoes were burned off and you were in awful shape. Guess you just couldn't make it any further, huh?"

Freddie nodded again.

"But the bag was safe," General Lipstead said in an awed voice. "Though how you ever got back to Mount Arnet so quickly, I'm damned if I know."

"Yeah," Waldron said thoughtfully. "Them other privates are still up there on the mountain trying to reach the wreck. Guess you're a fast worker."

"Leave the lad alone, now," the doctor said softly. "He needs rest. I never saw a man's feet in such condition. I'd swear he hit the ground and skidded twenty feet when he landed."

"**Y**EAH, corns," Sergeant Waldron said, a week later, when Corporal Fred Funk was called before General Lipstead for an honorable discharge, "You'd never believe it, but this Funk

guy makes a hero outa hisself, gets the Congressional Medal of Honor, and then is discharged from this man's army *because he's got corns.*"

His companion, a new man with the company, shook his head and scratched one ear thoughtfully.

"I heard of this Funk guy," he said. "When the President pinned that medal on him, he said 'Corporal Funk, I understand you are the fastest man in the United States Army.' You know what Funk said?"

Waldron shook his head.

"Funk just grinned and said he was also the only soldier who ever bought a pair of seven league boots. Wasn't that a screwy thing to say to the President?"

"Yeah," Waldron agreed. "Sure was screwy. I'll bet the President got a laugh outa that."

"Sure did. Jeez, that Funk's a screwy guy. Kinda lucky, too," he added.



DIESEL SCIENCE



HIGHER than a twelve-story building—such are the booms of the nine huge cranes being constructed in Cleveland for the United States Navy, Bureau of Yards and Docks. The tremendously powerful engines are Cooper-Bessemer Diesels.

The cranes are some of the largest ever constructed in the world. They are of the drydock type: they will run on four rails and will be able to move rapidly on straight or curved tracks and thus become readily available in any part of the shipyards where they are to be employed.

Completely self-contained and self-powered, each crane will be able to be operated so simply and with so much flexibility that one man, standing in the glass-enclosed control room, may direct it where he wants it to move by control levers.

The floor area of the machinery house (the latter is a part of the revolving superstructure situated high above the tracks) will be larger than that of a large one-story dwelling.

The two features of the power plant will be its compactness and flexibility. Power will be supplied by the Diesel engine which will drive an electric generator, and currents from the generator will drive the crane motors. Such an arrangement par-

allels that of Diesel electric locomotives. Each crane will be self-powered, to eliminate the use of conductors along the tracks.

The Diesel engine as a source of power not only gives the advantage of compactness and flexibility, but it will be the most efficient source of power available. The power plant, it must be remembered, will make each crane entirely independent of outside power sources, and will enable it to continue its operation easily in the event of an emergency. Auxiliary engines will equip each crane with independent supplies for lights and other electricity incidental to hoisting operations.

Even if the cranes' own power supply is interrupted, measures have been planned to provide means of electricity from outside sources.

Each crane's revolving superstructure will be able to rotate in a complete circle. The crane will have two hooks, the main hook and its auxiliary. Nearly a half mile of cable is to be used for the "threading" (more scientifically: reeving) of the hook blocks.

Cranes like these will, no doubt, invite huge swarms of people to the Navy yards—the attentive Royal Order of Steam-Shovel Watchers, so common on all construction jobs.

The WOODEN HAM

By MORRIS J. STEELE

TWO German officers marched briskly along the deserted street, hands on pistol butts, ready for target practice on any citizen who disregarded the Amsterdam eight o'clock curfew. Haarlem Street was dark and deserted as only a street can be when its people are cowering in the darkness of their rooms, under the Nazi yoke.

The faint glow of a single street lamp sent dim reflections against the tape-sealed window of a small butcher shop. *Oberleutnant* Carl Vaderlan caught a glimpse of something in that dirty window that stopped him in his tracks. He turned and stared at the pile of rich red meat displayed beyond the glass. In the center of the display a huge, juicy ham held the dim spotlight of the street lamp.

"Ho," he said in a brisk, hunger-sharpened voice. "What have we here?"

His companion followed him to the window and the two of them stared with wet lips at the well-cured masterpiece.

"You also are hungry?" *Oberleutnant* Vaderlan turned to his friend, the tone of his voice obviously suggesting that they do something about it without further delay.

Sergeant Anton Sayfared, short,

stout and a great eater, turned to the *Oberleutnant* with a grin on his sweating face.

"It looks fine," he said. "Fortunately I lived in Holland before you came. Have you never heard of the wooden hams of The Hague?"

Vaderlan's chin dropped. He scowled angrily.

"You mean it is of wood, this beautiful pig shank?"

Anton Sayfared nodded.

"A great injustice to us both," he admitted. "But I'm afraid that in all Holland our Fuehrer has left no such luscious tid-bit for a prize."

"But—but of wood," the *Oberleutnant* objected. "The Dutch scum who tease our palates in this manner should be shot."

Sergeant Sayfared continued to smile.

"It is at our Fuehrer's orders that such ersatz ham exists," he said. "In The Hague, long before the war, poor people put such hams on their tables to improve the atmosphere. Our government has suggested that butcher shops supply not only wooden hams, but steaks so rare that they would seem to melt in the mouth. A silly thing, yes, but it makes these Dutchmen

There was little food for the Dutch after the Nazi hordes took over. But they had their own method of keeping up morale



"You mean it is of wood—this beautiful pig shank?" the officer asked

happy to see and to remember what they used to have before we took their meat for our own families at home."

Oberleutnant Vaderlan was obviously displeased. He hated to leave with no more than the thought of such food in his mouth. If the Fuehrer approved of such a farce, so be it. He clicked his heels smartly and turned away from the display.

"We are already late for our appointment." His voice was sharpened by anger and the gnawing hunger in his stomach. "We must hurry."

The Nazi officers stepped away smartly down the street and the lone street lamp continued to glow on the breath-taking, ersatz ham.

BEHIND the little butcher shop on Haarlem Street, Papa Jan Karr sat in his chair, his gray old head leaning forward on bony hands. The hands, white and covered with little blue veins, clutched tightly around the top of a stout cane. His eyes were closed and he was listening. Jeanne Karr, the old man's daughter, was reading quietly from a crumpled letter, her shoeless feet pressed close to the small coal burner. Her two children, Peter and Rosana, cuddled tightly under the single sheet on the bed, drawing warmth from each other's frail bodies.

Jeanne Karr's voice was low and warm and the three of them listened closely as she read by the light of a weak-burning candle.

"... and I will be home soon. The Germans treat us well. I work each day in the gun factory, turning out more cannon for the great German Army to use..."

With a sob she dropped the paper to her knees. Papa Karr looked up and frowned.

"They make him write that way,"

he said kindly. "You needn't worry about your Johann. He will come home safe when it is over."

The girl continued to sob. Peter, his skinny, eight-year-old body quivering with pent-up emotion, climbed from the bed and went across the room, putting his small head on her lap.

"Don't cry, Mommy. The bad Nazis will go away some day."

Jeanne stopped crying quickly and put her hand over the little boy's lips.

"Hush, child. You mustn't talk like that."

At the front of the shop, someone knocked sharply on the door. Papa Karr leaned forward, his eyes growing suddenly hard.

"They have come again."

Jeanne said, "No—no," in a strained, small voice. The little girl, Rosana, started to cry in a whimpering monotone.

"Mama Jeanne, please, I'm hungry, Mama Jeanne."

The knock sounded again, more insistent than before. Jeanne stood up and went quickly through the curtain that separated the room from the shop. The old man called to her sharply, warning her to come back. Jeanne, hardly more than a child herself, went slowly toward the door.

A stranger stood outside. He wasn't in uniform. She went closer to the door, trying to see his face. The man might be a Jew. He was dressed in a ragged, dark cloak that hung to his ankles. His face was kindly, and in the lamp-light she could see him smile softly to her. She put one hand on the bolt, wanting to let in a friend, and dreading that he might be another Nazi playing some filthy trick to gain entrance.

"You may open the door." She could hear him faintly through the glass. "I mean no harm."

There was something in the warmth of his eyes, the kindly, pale face framed by long, shoulder-length hair and the heavy brown beard. She drew the door open silently and he stepped into the darkness of the shop. Jeanne drew the bolt tight once more.

"You want food?" she asked.

The stranger was ragged and lonely looking, and yet there was something in his face that made her feel warm and safe when she stood near him.

"You have food to sell?" he asked.

The voice was soft and yet filled with a confidence that she had not heard for a long time.

"A little," she said hesitantly. "We get few provisions now, but for our friends who are starving, there is always an ox-tail or a bit of liver."

THE man walked past her slowly and drew the curtain from the entrance to the inner room. He stepped inside. Papa Karr struggled to his feet and leaned heavily on his cane.

"Welcome to our home, such as it is."

"Papa," Jeanne said quickly. "The stranger does not care to hear of our misfortunes."

"But I hear of all misfortunes," the man said. He walked toward the children. Although they usually fled before those they did not know, both Peter and Rosana stepped forward and accepted his hand. "Your family is hungry," the man said. "Have you not eaten tonight?"

Jeanne gazed at the floor.

"We have only two pounds of liver in the ice chest," she confessed. "When that is gone, there will be no more. The children have had all the meat since last week."

"And you can get no more?"

Her temper flared. She faced him with hard, glittering eyes.

"How would you expect us to? The

Nazi dogs take all our food. Surely you live near here. You must know."

At once she was sorry that she had lost her temper. There were so many worries. So many heart-breaks. He did not seem to resent the hard words.

"I am sorry," he said. "Yes, I know that you suffer. Especially the little children."

"And how, sir, can we prevent it," Papa Karr demanded. "I have searched every stall in the city. I have stolen. . . ."

"I know what you are forced to do," the stranger said. "Believe me, those who starve you must destroy themselves so that forever after this war, men will be free."

"Who are you, who can evade the Nazi gunmen who enforce the curfew?" Papa Karr demanded. "Who can walk freely in the streets when no man is allowed abroad?"

The man backed slowly toward the door. In the candle-light his beard glinted red and his face seemed paler than ever.

"Let us say that I am the man who came for the wooden ham," he said quietly. "Guard your window well, for tonight you are rich in food and tomorrow the children of Amsterdam will eat."

He passed beyond the curtain and it fell, hiding him from the little group in the cold room. Jeanne stepped after him quickly. If she had hurt his feelings, there was yet the two pounds of liver. He could have a bit of it.

She went into the shop with her key, meaning to give him meat and let him out of the door. Her eyes widened with fright as they swept around the miserable room. The man had vanished. He could not get through the door, for it was locked and she held the key in her small, cold hand.

She returned to the room where her

family waited. Papa Karr was seated in his chair, rocking back and forth gently, propelled by the cane. His eyes were staring straight ahead as though into some far-off land. The children, still excited by the visit, sat close together on the bed.

"For tomorrow the children of Amsterdam will eat." Papa Karr's thin lips moved slowly, pronouncing the words with a reverence that Jeanne had never heard.

Peter came toward her slowly, his tiny hand folding around her finger.

"Mommy," he said in an excited whisper. "There was a white light around that man's head."

"Praise the Saints!" Papa Karr sprang to his feet. He stood there quivering in every limb, steadying himself on the long, tough cane. "The child is right! I saw it too! Jeanne, daughter, fetch the wooden ham."

Jeanne stared at him as though he had suddenly gone mad. Then a strange new light shone in her eyes. She turned and ran eagerly into the shop. The three of them heard her little gasp, then the glad cry that came from her lips. She came back quickly. In her arms, held tightly like a newborn child, was a huge, well-smoked ham.

It was not of wood.

She put it carefully into Papa Karr's

lap and stood before him, tears streaming from her eyes.

"You must help me, all of you." Her voice was eager and filled with awe. "All the other wooden meat has turned to real meat. Quickly, before the German patrols see us."

OBERLEUTNANT VADERLAN was returning from the S.S. meeting. Still with him, Sergeant Sayfared paused once more before the butcher shop on Haarlam Street and called to his superior officer who had already passed several feet beyond the window.

"Anton, come here quickly. I have discovered a fine joke."

Angered by this reminder of his lost ham, the *Oberleutnant* paused. His eyes caught the empty shop window and he sauntered back to his friend's side.

"It is gone," he said in a mildly surprised voice. "The wooden ham, all the ersatz meat, is gone."

Sayfared chuckled.

"It is a good joke, yes? These Dutchmen are getting so hungry now that they eat wood. Wait until our Fuehrer hears of this! Tomorrow, probably, all the children of Amsterdam will be chewing on that cleverly painted ham."

THE END

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VIGNETTES OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

By ALEXANDER BLADE

John James Audubon

He was not a scientist—only a hobbyist. But his hobby made of him a famous naturalist

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON would hardly be regarded at the present time as a scientist, nor even an artist of note. Yet his love of nature, and his devotion to that aspect of it which supremely enlisted his enthusiasm, fully warrants the inclusion of the story of his life and of his work in any list of those who have taken part in adding materially to the world's stock of classified knowledge. He was a man of simple and kindly disposition, attractive in person and in personality.

In his prime he displayed all the vigor, virility and endurance of the typical pioneer. In his old age he was the pride of his descendants, and an honored friend of all who enjoyed the pleasure of his acquaintance. The actual results that he left to the world were not so important as the example of devotion to an ideal. Yet, but for his work we should know much less than we do of the abundant and very remarkable bird life which characterized the eastern parts of the North American continent in the years when it first became known to the white man. In contrast, it may be understood how much has been lost forever because, when the Spanish and Portuguese overran the rest of the New World there was no one with them of the type of Audubon to record its wild life except in words.

John James Audubon was born at Mandeville, in Louisiana, then a Spanish colony, probably in 1780, and died January 27, 1851. This date of his birth, however, is merely a tradition and probably he was born some years before.

His father was a wealthy Frenchman, the owner of large estates in Santo Domingo. His mother was of pure Spanish ancestry. His childhood and youth were spent in France, where he was educated and given instructions in drawing by the famous painter David. During the American Revolutionary War his father acquired an estate near the city of Philadelphia. When the French Revolution broke out in 1789 he gave this land to the young man, who came to America in the following year and took possession of it. He lived here for ten years devoting the most of his time to the study of wild bird life.

In 1808 he married Lucy Bakewell, the daughter of a neighbor, an Englishman, and at once mi-

grated to the West. After passing ten years in a vain effort to establish himself in business in Kentucky and Louisiana, and finally losing all his property, he was forced to support himself by drawing portraits and teaching dancing and fencing. Every hour that could be spared from these uncongenial but necessary labors was devoted to his studies in the untouched forests and beautiful valleys of the new land into which he had emigrated. No deepening of his difficulties could cure him of his heedlessness or cause him to forego any opportunity to add to his knowledge or series of drawings of birds. The result was a collection of drawings which, of its kind, has never since been approached in accuracy and completeness, for he was a careful artist.

With each sketch he made voluminous notes of colors and habits so far as he could obtain them. Throughout his long struggle for maintenance amid the crude conditions of frontier life, and under the handicap of an artistic disposition that would not be denied, he was so faithfully aided and encouraged by his devoted wife, that in 1824 he was able to take his collection to Philadelphia, which by then had become an intellectual center of considerable note.

There he found friends who recognized his drawings and their value, and who provided the means to take it to London in 1827, where he quickly was able to publish it under the title of *Birds of America*. The prints, beautifully executed, came from the press in folio parts, at the rate of about five parts per year until its completion in 1838, in 87 parts, containing 435 plates, giving 1065 figures. A complete good copy (of which about 175 sets are supposed to be in existence, 80 of which are in America) is now worth about \$2000. No reading matter accompanied these plates, but this was prepared later, and published in Edinburgh. This project proved so overwhelmingly a commercial as well as artistic success, that he was relieved from all financial worries for the balance of his life.

In 1842 he purchased a small estate on the Hudson River (now within the limits of the city of New York), where he passed the remainder of his life with his two sons and their families.

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Don't let the cost of this war pile up a huge mountain of debt that will rob your children of a chance to be happy and to live the life that is rightfully theirs!

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PEARL-HANDLED



Mike was in a tight spot. He needed a gun—quick! And a dead hand gave him one!

IN THE first place, you gotta understand that there's something inside Americans that make 'em different than the little yellow Japs. Some people call it conscience. In Mike Humphry's case, I didn't think the guy even had one. Anyhow, he never showed it.

Before the war, Mike took cash from wherever it came. He organized the laundry drivers of Seattle, collected two grand a week and headed for bigger things. Mike weighed two-fifty in

his stockings and without benefit of shoulder pads. He moved like a cat and struck like an eagle. He never smiled and he never left the tough jobs for his boys.

Then Pearl Harbor came along, and Mike's kid brother joined the air force and went to the South Pacific.

Mike didn't let the war cramp his style. He had Seattle organized tighter than a full sardine can. He collected enough cash to float the war debt and he carried a snub-nosed automatic

PEARL-HANDLED

POISON *by* RICHARD CASEY



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everywhere he went just to enforce his point of view.

His kid brother sent a few letters, and every time Mike read one of them, he'd draw a couple of thousand from the bank and go for a walk. I caught him two or three times coming out of the U.S.O. center. He'd just pass it off with a foolish grin. Once he went down and gave the Red Cross a pint of his blood.

"If you tell the boys, Johnny," he barked at me, "I'll fill you so full of

Mike, unaware of the danger at his back, caught the men's coat lapels between savage fingers

lead that you'll sink like a Jap submarine."

That was Mike Humphry, tougher than nails and soft in his heart for that kid in the air force.

About that time, Mike started doing business with Mr. Smith. Mike and me never saw Mr. Smith. One of Mr. Smith's boys came around to the club. He was a dried up little shrimp who dodged his own shadow and looked scared every time he sidled up to Mike.

Anyhow, Mr. Smith had dough;

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plenty of it. He sent word that he was a South American representative and he couldn't get enough steel and war material from the regular sources. He wanted to get some off the black market. Mike took care of that. They were preaching all over the west coast that our little brown brothers down south were great guys.

"Help 'em," they said, "and make 'em our pals after the war."

Mike helped 'em. We picked up all the steel and powder we could find in Seattle and a ship load of it cast off after dark one night. The ship had the name BRAZIL painted all over the front of it. That sounded good to Mike and me, and we went to the club with a nice little wad of green-backs to put away. The next day Mike sent half the cash to the Red Cross and told me he'd push me off the Bay Bridge if I told anyone.

It went on like that for a long time. Mr. Smith never showed up himself, but the little guy who represented him came every week. There were a couple more ship loads of stuff and a lot more cash to distribute.

Mike sent a handy gadget to his brother. He picked out a little pearl-handled revolver, got permission from the authorities and sent it in case the kid got in a tight spot. That gun was a pretty little thing. It had mother-of-pearl all up and down the grip and the barrel was of the smoothest, hardest steel I'd ever seen. It felt good and sort of comforting just to hold it.

Then Mike got word that his kid brother had been shot down over the Bismark Sea, and would he please accept the medal that the kid had earned the last time he took a dive.

Mike took that pretty hard. For a week he wouldn't even see Mr. Smith's representative.

"Johnny," he said. "What the hell

am I living for? They won't take me in the army. All I can do is give cash."

I grinned.

"Sort of a Robin Hood," I said. "Robbing the ginks with dough and paying off to Uncle Sam. You're doing okay, Mike."

"You ain't told anyone I'm going soft?" His eyes were almost pleading. I never saw Mike like that before.

"No one," I said. "In fact, I been giving blood myself. Got too damned much, anyhow."

THEN his brother's letter came. It was written before the kid crashed, but the mail got screwed up and it reached Seattle a week after the boy died. I never saw the letter, but Mike got hard and cold when he read it. He tore the letter up in little pieces and his lips were working mighty queer when he looked up at me.

"Mr. Smith's man been in lately?" he asked.

I told him yes. The guy was driving me crazy, trying to get to see Mike.

"Good," he said. "This time I'd like to meet Mr. Smith himself. Kinda funny he hasn't been around himself."

I didn't think so. A good many of the boys didn't like to face Mike personally, but I couldn't tell him that.

"The next time he comes in, Johnny, put a tail on him. I'd like to see where Mr. Smith hangs his hat."

The shrimp came in a little later that same day. Mike was with him for a half hour and promised some more stuff. Then the shrimp came out and I tailed him half way across town. He was slippery but I switched another man on his trail and found out he went into a little restaurant down on First Street.

"Good," Mike said when I told him. He took his automatic out and had a look into the chambers. "We'll go

down and see Smith personally."

How did he know Smith was a Jap? Just figured it out, I guess. Mike wasn't so smart. He only went through grade school. Just the same, it didn't take a master-mind to connect Smith with the kid's last letter.

"The kid said he was going out with a couple of bombers to spot a Jap supply ship masquerading as the BRAZIL!"

Mike told me that on the way down town, and he said it in a voice that made my spine shrivel up and ice water start to percolate in my veins.

There wasn't anything we could do about the BRAZIL, or nothing I could say to make him feel better, so I shut up.

Mike don't like company on that kind of a job. I stayed in the front of the restaurant and he went back and pushed the curtains open that led into the back room. I pulled out my rod and laid it on the table. Lighting a cigarette, I watched the front door. The girl at the cash register kept an eye on me, but she didn't dare to move. There wasn't anyone else in the joint.

I heard Mike's voice, smooth as glass, talking to someone behind the curtain.

Then Mr. Smith, I guess it was, started to protest in a high-pitched, frightened voice. They kept talking like that for a while, Mike's voice low and almost gentle. Mr. Smith was getting excited.

Then there was a shot, a shrill, pig-like squeal of pain, and another shot.

I DIDN'T waste much time getting to that curtain. Before I could push it aside, Mike heaved through it and stood there, his mouth open, eyes wide. His arms were hanging limply at his sides and his coat was torn from his shoulder as though something heavy

had ripped it open.

"What the hell," I snorted. "I thought he got you."

Mike didn't say a thing. He just stood there staring at the girl by the cash register.

I pushed by him into the back room.

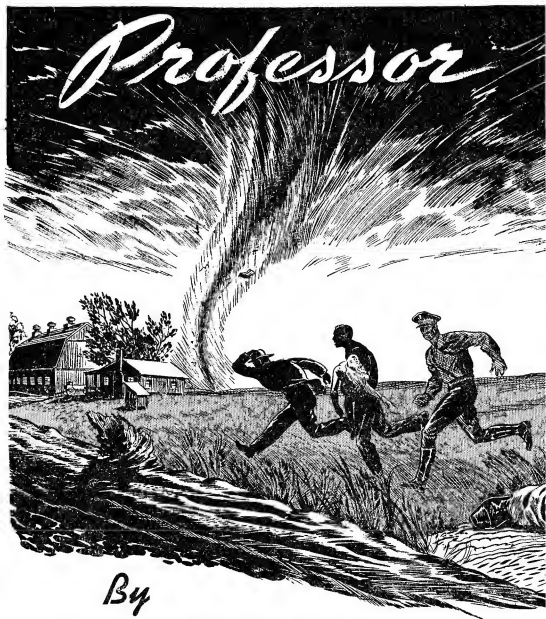
There were two Mr. Smiths. Anyhow, there were two Japs stretched out on the floor, and both of them had slugs in their bellies. I kneeled down and saw that one of them was holding a lead-filled, wicked-looking blackjack. He must have come up behind Mike.

He was lying on his face near the other Jap who had crumpled up in the corner. Mike had been facing Mr. Smith the first, and his shot had carried straight through his heart.

Then I saw the gun. At first I couldn't believe it, but there wasn't another like it in the States. It was near the wall, tossed against the baseboard with the grip leaning upward. I picked it up, and turned it over in my hand. The barrel smelled clean and there wasn't a trace of powder inside it. I opened the chamber but it wasn't loaded. I guess my hand started to shake a little, and I was wondering if maybe I hadn't given too much blood that last trip to the Red Cross.

It was the same rod Mike had sent to his kid brother. The pearl handle glistened in the lamplight, and I saw a little groove had been filed carefully into the base of the grip.

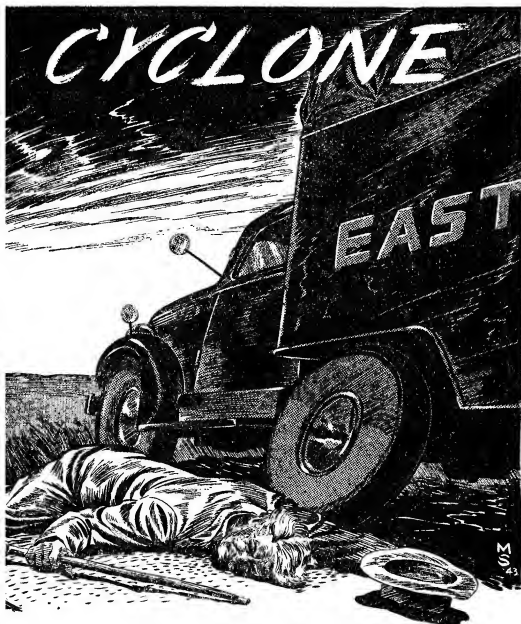
Mr. Smith and his partner had been fighting something they didn't reckon with. I wiped my prints off the rod and put it back against the wall carefully. The coppers would have a lot of figuring to do if they found a solution. The kid that owned that rod was at the bottom of the Pacific, about six thousand miles away. I don't think they worried very much. There's too damned many Japs anyhow.



By

ALEXANDER BLADE

To all outward appearances, Professor Walden was a harmless little man. Then the farmers in the district discovered he knew how to harness the forces of Nature



Sands scooped the girl into his arms and, with Beasley and Clark, raced madly across the field toward the house

A MAN came out of the kitchen and stood behind his wife on the screened back porch of the farmhouse. He was dressed in overalls and his face was burned red from the sun. His face and hands were dripping wet, and he held a towel.

"You say your name's Walden, mister?" he asked the middle-aged man who had come up to the house from the road.

Professor Walden nodded. He was a frail, mousy little man, with mild eyes that never wavered from the man

behind the screen. His thin, parchment-like face, wisps of gray hair that fluttered against an almost bare scalp, were indicative of long sunless hours spent indoors.

The woman hadn't moved. She looked frightened, waiting for her husband to handle the situation. The farmer's facial muscles worked strangely. The towel fell from his arm and fluttered to the floor. He didn't reach to pick it up. Instead, his fingers balled into heavy fists.

"You the same man's been calling on my neighbors the last few days?"

The professor nodded once more, making no attempt to speak.

"You been asking for money," the man on the porch said in a cold voice. "Lots of money. You been promising protection." His shoulders squared. "*From what, mister?*"

Professor Waldon's lips tightened. He was wasting time. He'd been wasting time for a week. He'd have to show these country bumpkins that he meant business.

"Am I to understand that you refuse to become a member of my little group?" The question was softly, almost gently, put.

Jack Freed, the man on the porch, stiffened.

"You're damned right I refuse!" He stepped closer to the door. "You get the hell off my place and stay off, understand? You ain't pulling none of this Al Capone stuff on us. If I catch you within half a mile of here again, I'll wring your skinny little neck. I'll run a pitchfork through your gut. That's the answer we got for you city gangsters."

Professor Waldon smiled. It wasn't a pleasant smile. It showed the yellow teeth that were usually well covered. It made his blue eyes squint until they were like pin points of hard

steel. He backed away into the darkness.

"You understand the penalty for your refusal?"

Freed took a step forward.

"I understand you're either ready for the county asylum or already escaped from it," he said. "You damned pipsqueak, get out of here."

Professor Waldon turned and walked quickly toward his Ford car. He had tried to collect from seven farmers along this road. Thus far his luck had been poor.

Not that he felt badly about it. His was a strictly untried venture, but he was confident of himself. He stared back at the farm. It was typical of the section. A box of a house flanked by a huge red barn and weather-beaten out-buildings.

Professor Waldon had driven sedately into seven farm yards, and left each of them unsuccessfully.

None of them was to be spared.

His second visit would be greeted with much more respect than the first.

THE cyclone struck Freed's place first. No one saw it coming because twisters are like that. It ripped down on a little three mile section of the Plain Road, lifted Freed's house into the air and tipped it over into the farm yard. It came late on a clear, warm night.

The barn roof was never found—not a timber or a shingle. The chickens were blown through a fence and killed, a hundred of them. Horses, cows, farm equipment—all destroyed.

The Red Cross was on the scene by eight the following morning. Freed stood in what was once his own back yard, rubbing a calloused hand over his eyes, a grimy bit of cardboard gripped tightly in his left hand.

His wife Sarah stood near him,

watching the Red Cross truck come up the drive.

Sheriff Beasely of Bath was with the driver. Beasely walked toward Freed. He was a stocky, keen-eyed man of about fifty. He talked in a stern voice that had developed from running the sheriff's office of Bath for the past twenty years. He gripped Freed's hand tightly.

"Bad luck, Jack," he said. "We've got tents in the truck. We'll leave two for you and be around later with food. Have to get over to Narish's place. The damned thing took every last building he had."

Freed couldn't talk. There was a gleam in his eyes that was more than fear. It was a deep-seated, terrible anger.

He pushed the cardboard ticket toward Beasely.

Nick Beasely's jaw dropped.

"You—got one, too?"

Freed nodded and Sarah started to cry softly.

"That little man was here just last night," she said in a low voice. "Jack threw him off the place."

The truck backed into a level spot, and the driver started throwing canvas out the rear door. Nick Beasely took the ticket, reached into his pocket and removed a half dozen pieces of cardboard identical to it. He stared at them. Each read:

COMPLIMENTS OF PROFESSOR CYCLONE

"My God," he said in a strained voice. "It can't be possible. The guy's the Devil himself."

Freed nodded.

"But I still can't understand," he said. "I heard he threatened the other farmers. They all kicked him out. None of us thought . . ."

Beasely shook his head.

"I don't get it; not at all," he admitted, and pushed the collection of cards in his pocket. "A dried-up little man threatens a lot of farmers. They get mad and want to tar and feather him. The next night a cyclone drops down and tears hell outa all of them."

His eyes raised to stare steadily into Freed's.

"I don't know how it could be. Where did you find the ticket?"

Freed shivered.

"It was in Sarah's pocketbook this morning. We left it on the piano last night."

Beasely nodded again.

"Narish found one stuck in his pocket. The rest found them the same way. How in hell . . . ?"

His voice trailed off as he turned toward the truck.

"Better get these tents ready," he said. "Looks like rain. There's a lot of kids over at Narish's. We'll have to get them under cover."

THAT'S the way it ended. At least, the first incident. By night the Plain Road looked as though an invading army had spread across it. Tents were up. Woodlots of elm trees, twisted and broken in half, gave a ghostly, out-of-this-world appearance to the fields. Barns, torn into small planks and spread over fields. Houses completely destroyed. Two school houses leveled to the ground. Tin roofs wrapped around trees like horse shoes. Men sobbing, their possessions gone, spirits broken. Desolation for seven farms.

Midnight—the Red Cross in control. A lonely Ford shook and clattered down the narrow road. Professor Waldon, a smile on his lips, surveyed the havoc.

He passed the tents where Jack and Sarah Freed were sitting beside a single lantern, trying to plan another life.

Professor Waldon grinned delightedly. This had been a fine test. He was sure that on his next visit to Jack and Sarah Freed they would be more interested in what he had to offer.

* * *

FRANCES WALDON opened the door of the green cottage and smiled at the man who had just knocked.

"Oh! Fred, you're here already?"

She held the door wider, a pleased expression on her youthful face. Fred Sands walked into the living-room. He stopped short, staring around.

"Good Lord, haven't you settled yet?"

Frances, in a neat blue apron, dust-cap over her head, smiled defensively.

"We've been in Lansing a week," she admitted. "But Dad's been away most of the time. I've done all the work by myself. It's pretty hard."

Sands settled into a sheet-covered chair, and propped himself up lazily. He was perhaps twenty-six, lean and outdoorish. Sands was taking officers' training at Michigan State.

"Look," he said eagerly. "When I heard you and your Dad had come up from Ann Arbor for the summer, I hurried right over. How about letting me help out. We can put things in order in a hurry."

Frances Waldon stood before him, broom in hand, brown eyes sparkling in admiration. She had known Fred for six months. Now that he had answered her note so quickly, she knew that she held more than a passing interest for him.

"By all means!" She thrust the broom into his hands. "I've cleaned the dining-room. Sweep it out and place the furniture. The kitchen is complete except for barrels of dishes you can unpack."

"Golly," Sands said. "After the way they've been pushing me around, it'll

sure be nice seeing you once in a while. You said Pop Waldon is traveling. I thought this was to be a vacation?"

Frances looked worried.

"I don't quite understand Dad," she confessed. "You see, he overworked at Ann Arbor. Last week he just packed up his most precious books and suggested a vacation. We rented this place and it seems that this will be our home for the next three months. Dad's out every day, driving around the country. He's interested in wind storms and their causes. Claims this is the ideal spot to study them. Some insurance company is paying him for his research work."

By this time they were both busy in the small dining-room. One corner of it held a large, glassed cupboard, two barrels of dishes and a table that had been taken apart in sections. With the floor swept, small talk passing the time for them both, Sands was at last busy with the table. Gradually the room took shape and he found himself unpacking the dishes.

"Expect to be here all summer myself," Sands confessed at last. "I'll go into officers' training in the fall and should see action yet if they don't kill the Japs off before I get at them."

Frances felt a little shudder pass through her.

"You—you'll be at officers' training for some time?"

Fred Sands looked up, tenderness in his eyes.

"Don't worry, sport, I'm not leaving you until I have to. I haven't been able to find a 'best girl', but things are picking up."

Frances Waldon was very busy just then, her head bent low over a barrel.

"Smart, aren't you?" There was a pleased ring in her voice.

Fred smiled.

"Not so smart," he admitted. "Just

darned set in my ways."

HE WAS busy after that carefully unwrapping the dishes that were to be placed on the cupboard shelves. Half way down in the barrel, he hesitated suddenly as a creased card fluttered from a cup and landed face up. He reached in carefully and picked it up, shielding it with the rim of the barrel.

He read the message quickly, and a frown creased his forehead.

COMPLIMENTS OF PROFESSOR CYCLONE

"Frances," he said in a sharp voice, then regretted that he had spoken.

The girl looked up.

"Break a dish?" she asked.

Fred Sands hesitated, then pushed the card out of sight under the packing.

"Caught a lovely splinter with my thumb," he said. "It startled me for a minute."

Frances Waldon straightened, hearing the chug-chug of a car as it entered the drive.

"Dad's home," she said, and brushed hair back from her face. "He'll be glad to see you, Fred."

Fred Sands straightened, slipping the folded card into his pocket as he did so.

"Good," he said aloud; then, to himself, "But I have my doubts."

The screen opened and Professor Waldon came in, his soft shoes making little pat-pat sounds on the carpet as he crossed the living-room. Nothing marred the pleasure of his gentle smile as he saw Fred Sands standing near his daughter.

"Hello, Fred." He walked toward the couple. "This is a real pleasure. I see you answered Frances' call for help promptly. She needs it. I'm spend-

ing more time away from home than I have any right to."

Sands accepted the old man's hand, feeling a bit foolish about his thoughts of a few moments ago.

"Glad that we meet again, Prof," he said. "Still fooling around with air currents, I hear."

Professor Waldon dismissed the subject with a gesture of disinterest.

"Very dry subject, my boy. I'm a crack-pot on it, and in addition to that the Upper States Insurance Company pays me a healthy sum to do a little predicting for them now and then. Can't pass up good money during summer vacation."

They all laughed and Frances suggested dinner.

IT WAS several hours later when Fred Sands took his leave. In those hours, however, he noticed that Professor Waldon seemed aged and a trifle more sure of himself than he had in the old days. Some of the indecision and the absent-mindedness were gone. Waldon seemed happy and preoccupied.

Also, Fred Sands thought as he climbed aboard the East Lansing bus, Waldon had a lot more money than usual. He had seen the roll when Waldon paid a delivery boy who came to the back door. The professor's pocket book was bulging with bills—big bills.

Professor Waldon had done even better than Sands could guess. Farmers, unable to accuse an old man of stirring up the winds, were still frightened and superstitious enough not to take the chance Jake Freed had taken. Three thousand dollars was now the set price for protection, and Waldon had visited a dozen farms since morning.

A dozen farms that were protected, at least for the present, from receiving a card like the one pressed deep into

Fred Sands' pocket. A card that meant their entire life work wiped away over night:

COMPLIMENTS OF PROFESSOR CYCLONE

FRED SANDS turned on his side, leaned back on his pillow and tried to look unconcerned about the question he was going to ask.

"Harry . . ."

Harry Freed, his roommate, looked up from the reading-table and placed his book to one side.

"Thought you'd gone to sleep," he said absently. "Say, this book *Eleven Came Back* is some . . ."

Sands grinned.

"I know," he interrupted. "Look, Harry, tell me about that cyclone again, will you?"

Harry Freed's eyes narrowed.

"I'd rather not," he said. Freed was heavy-set and given to slow, careful speech. His body seemed to tense as he continued. "Dad lost . . . Well, you know, Fred. We were roommates all through school at Ann Arbor. I've had Dad's money behind me. Now I'm in officers' training. I can't get out if I want to, and I ought to be at home—what's left of it—helping Dad clean things up. To talk or even think about it hurts like hell."

Sands nodded sympathetically.

"I'm not being nosey," he explained.

"I think I might be able to help . . ."

"No." Harry Freed stood up. He walked to the door, then turned and faced the man on the bed. "No good. I know you've got money. I told you about that before."

"It's not that," Fred protested. "I can't tell you what is on my mind now, not until I'm sure. I might know something . . ."

"If it's about that old man who visited Dad, that's out," Freed said. "I never could understand how he could be con-

nected with it. Storms don't work for anyone. He must have been an old screwball. Nick Beasley, the sheriff at Bath, questioned him. He just chuckled in Beasley's face. Says he's a representative of some insurance company."

"Upper States Insurance?" Fred Sands shot the question at him.

Freed's eyes widened.

"Why, yes. How did you know?"

Sands shook his head.

"That's just what I can't tell until I know what I'm talking about. Someone is involved in the thing that I could hurt very deeply. I'm not so sure that the cyclone *was* natural. You see, I studied wind currents when I was in school. All I'm asking now is did you actually see one of those cards that was left after the cyclone?"

"Sands, if you know anything . . ."

Fred Sands frowned.

"You're a pal of mine," he said. "I won't talk now, but believe me, Harry, if I find out I can help in any way to protect others from what happened to your family, I won't let anything stand in my way. It might be pretty hard, so I'm going slow. Now, you saw one of those cards?"

Freed nodded.

"Nick Beasley showed it to me. He's trying to trace the print shop that put them out."

SANDS drew the crumpled card from his pocket and passed it over without a word. Harry Freed took it, turned the printed side up and stared with incredulous eyes.

"I'll be damned. Where did you get this, Fred?"

"It's the same as the one the sheriff showed you?"

Freed's face turned an angry red.

"The same! Where did you get it?"

"From the last place in the world I'd ever suspect." Sands took the card

back again. "Does Beasely, that sheriff at Bath, have a description of this Professor Cyclone?"

"He ought to," Freed said grimly. "Several farmers lost everything they had after he had visited them. They didn't forget. Besides that, he's collected a lot of money up there since then. No one will admit it to Beasely and he's at a standstill. You can't arrest a man for threatening to stir up a cyclone. It would sound pretty silly in court."

Sands got up and started to dress.

"Not so silly but what others are paying protection to avoid the same thing. Is that right?"

"That's right," Freed said. "Are you going out again tonight?"

Sands was buttoning his shirt.

"Tell anyone who calls, I'll be back Monday morning," he said. "It's ten o'clock Friday night now. I'm heading for Bath—and Nick Beasely."

Freed's eyes lighted up.

"Suppose I could go along?"

"Stick to your books, laddie." Sands put a friendly hand on the younger man's shoulder. "Your temper is pitched pretty high. I'm expecting to talk with Professor Cyclone this weekend, and it's going to demand some pretty delicate handling. If I need you, I'll phone."

They shook hands.

"Look up my Dad," Freed begged. "He's feeling pretty low."

Sands opened the door, then hesitated.

"Call Frances Waldon for me and tell her I'll see her Monday night, will you?" He passed a slip of paper to Freed. "Here's the number."

"Sure, glad to. Got a case on the girl?"

"And how," Sands said, and closed the door.

Freed stared at the paper in his hand.

"Waldon?" he said in a low voice. "Afraid to hurt someone's feelings?" He folded the paper carefully and put it into his pocket. He went to the window and stared after Sands as he crossed the campus and disappeared into the darkness.

"Waldon? I wonder?"

As though he had made a decision, Freed went to the closet and dragged out a raincoat. He slipped into it, left the room, closed and locked the door and walked rapidly down the hall.

SHERIFF NICK BEASELY was badly puzzled. Bath wasn't a big town, and it had suffered from cyclones many times before. Nick hadn't had a detective case on his hands since that murder at the school house several years back. Now he wasn't quite sure whether this was a case for the law or a case for God Almighty. Cyclones just didn't demand human attention, or brook human interference. When they came, they came without preview. They certainly didn't fit into the picture of an old man demanding money to keep them away.

Nick was no fool. In fifty years he had learned a lot about science and freaks. Maybe this Professor Cyclone could see such things in the stars. Maybe he knew what was going to happen and just tried to scare them into paying for something that was bound to happen anyhow.

Nick rubbed his chin reflectively and took the cards from his pocket once more.

COMPLIMENTS OF PROFESSOR CYCLONE

Damned if it didn't give a man the shudders.

A knock sounded on Nick's office door. He swung his feet down off the desk hurriedly and swivelled until he

had a good view of anyone who might come in.

"Open up," he said. "Don't have to knock."

The door opened and a young fellow came in. He had an honest grin, sandy brown hair that refused to stay combed, and blue eyes that sparkled as they saw the stout figure of Nick Beasely at the desk.

"Mr. Beasely?" Fred Sands said, "I heard you take your feet off the desk. Put 'em back, sir, where you'll be comfortable."

Nick's eyes widened slightly.

"Looks like we got a detective in our midst." He stood up and offered a hairy hand. "What can I do for you?"

Sands took the proffered hand.

"My name's Sands—Fred Sands," he said. "Taking officers' training down at East Lansing. I came up to see you about Doctor Cyclone."

Beasely's eyebrows arched and his hand went a little limp in Fred's grasp.

"Everyone wants to see me about that guy," he said sadly. "Sit down. I don't know much but I'll tell it to anyone who's got any business knowing it."

He sat down, swung his feet back to the desk and said:

"Ain't much in the way of chairs. Don't sit around long enough. Pull up that frayed object at my right."

Sands drew the old chair over near the desk, sat down and leaned forward.

"I guess I'm entitled to know what happened," he said doubtfully. "I came up here at Harry Freed's suggestion."

Beasely relaxed. He knew Harry. Jack Freed's boy. Freed had lost as much as the rest of them.

"That puts you in the front line," he said. "What is it you want to know?"

Fred Sands had thought things out pretty carefully since he left Lansing.

"Can you pin anything on this man who calls himself Waldon," he asked. "Has he actually broken any laws?"

BEASELY'S fist crashed down on the desk.

"Godammit, no!" he shouted. "That's what burns me up. I can lock him up for threatening Freed and the others. A jury will laugh their heads off when I try to accuse him of starting a cyclone. I've heard by back fences that he's back demanding, and getting, a mint of money from other farmers who are scared to death. I know who they are and I'm trying to get them to talk, to go to court and accuse him of blackmail or something. They are scared to death. None of 'em will admit that they've donated a cent to this old cootie. I tell you, Sands, I'm about nuts."

He sank back, eyes closed tightly, fists clenched.

"Then, if Cyclone doesn't get caught in the act of getting the gods to start a storm, or accepting money from your friends, there's nothing you can do?"

"Nothing. I imagine he's giving a receipt of some kind for the money he gets. Claims he's an agent for the Upper States Insurance Company. I've checked that. It's a legitimate outfit. They have main offices in Detroit and temporary offices in the Olds Hotel in Lansing. Nothing black there and they have a Professor Herbert Waldon working for them as a sort of research man."

"You've checked to find out if he's the same man?"

"Look, youngster," Beasely said suddenly. "I don't know why I'm telling you this, except that you're a pal of Harry Freed's. Yes, we've found out that Herbert Waldon fits the description given. We don't know if he's Professor Cyclone, because we've never seen him leave one of them damn cards.

But he's air-tight. Protected from every angle. We know where he lives—we know that he has a daughter named Frances—and I know why you're up here this week-end."

He sat back, a triumphant look in his eyes.

Fred Sands scowled.

"You've a pretty efficient outfit, haven't you?" he said coldly.

Beasely grinned.

"Now don't get mad," he said. "And don't be sore at Harry. The kid got to worrying about you and what you were up to. He knew Waldon's name and you mentioned it when you left. Harry called an hour ago and asked me to tell you to lay off. You'll just get in trouble and break some nice girl's heart. I think you know what I mean. I've been handling the law around here for years. I think you're on the level. Can't explain why, but I guess you *look* square. Now, why don't you go back to school and forget all about it?"

SANDS was silent for a full minute.

He knew that his knowledge might wash up everything that was between Frances Waldon and himself. He didn't blame Harry. In fact, the more he saw of Harry Freed and Nick Beasely, the more he wanted to help. It wasn't a pleasant decision to make, but he made it.

"Look, Nick." He didn't even realize he had used the Sheriff's first name. "You're on the level with me. I'm the same way with you. I'm in love with Fran Waldon. I think she likes me pretty well. But when one man starts out to make a fortune by wrecking the lives of God knows how many innocent people, I can't stand by and watch him do it. You've been trying to establish one fact: Is Waldon the same man who's leaving those 'Compliment' cards?"

Beasely was staring straight into Sand's eyes.

"You don't have to . . ."

"I want you to have this," Sands continued, ignoring Beasely's words. He drew the crumpled card from his pocket and flipped it on the desk. "This is one of those Cyclone cards. I found it when Miss Waldon and I were unpacking dishes at Waldon's home. It must have fallen from his pocket."

Beasely picked up the card and stared at it with gradually narrowing eyes. A low whistle escaped his lips.

"I think I owe you a vote of thanks for this," he said. "It puts a steadier light on everything. Maybe we better get the State Police in about now. Things are getting a little out of my reach."

He picked up the phone and leaning over, started cranking on the phone box at the side of the desk.

"Hello, Myrtle. Put a call through to East Lansing. Yes, the State Police. I want to talk with Captain Clark—Deems Clark."

HARRY FREED parked in a drive half a block down LaPeer Street from the green cottage where the Waldon's had moved in. It was well past two in the morning. After calling Sheriff Beasely, he had decided to waste no time. He didn't know that Waldon had already been traced and given up as a bad job. Harry Freed knew only that his mother and father were living in an old tent where their home had once stood. Harry wasn't cautious. He was beyond that. He was mad all the way through. Anger pumped hot blood through his wrists until the fists that clenched the wheel were tight with agony.

His eyes, staring through the darkness, were on the front door of the cottage.

Several hours ago he had watched a girl he thought to be Frances Waldon come out and hail a cab to town. Thus far she hadn't returned.

A single light burned at the rear of the cottage. He had to fight himself to keep from entering the little house and throttling the professor with his bare hands.

That wouldn't do. There was a better way.

A big freight truck entered the far end of the block, slipped into low gear and rolled to a stop almost across from him.

Eastern Trucking was lettered in red along the side of the trailer. He noticed it because sight of the truck touched a vaguely familiar spot in his mind. The motor purred slowly.

He looked back toward the cottage. The front door opened and a slightly built old man came out. He was carrying a heavy cane. Harry Freed knew Professor Waldon. He had seen him many times in Ann Arbor.

The professor looked both ways along the street. Although it was dark, Harry slumped over the wheel until he was sure no one could see him.

A strange thing happened.

The lights on the truck opposite him went out. The cab door opened. The professor, apparently satisfied, walked briskly to the truck and climbed in. The lights went on again and the truck roared into low gear and started to move away.

Freed controlled himself with difficulty. Thus far, the truck had not awakened anything but curiosity within him. Perhaps a friend of the professor had offered to give him a lift. That was often done in spite of regulations to the contrary.

He waited until the truck turned the corner on South Logan. Then he backed out and followed at a safe distance.

Logan was well lighted but the traffic was heavy.

Waldon had seen him but a few times. There was no danger as long as he stayed in traffic.

HE COULD see the truck well enough. He followed it past the Olds plant, up the incline and over Grand River Bridge. The traffic lessened and Freed fell behind a safe distance. The truck didn't hesitate at Mount Hope Avenue, but rolled straight through on the Eaton Rapids road.

Harry knew the way well. Eaton Rapids was the next town, a small woolen-mill village sixteen miles away.

Then a thought struck Freed.

Between him and Eaton Rapids was a rich, rolling farm country. A section thus far untouched by Professor Cyclone. A group of farm homes where money wouldn't be too hard to collect.

He clenched his teeth and kept driving. Once the truck veered out and stopped. Harry drove straight past, went around the big curve beyond the school house and drove off on a small country road. He stopped the car, doused the lights and waited.

The truck roared past on the concrete and he backed out and followed again. This time he kept his lights out. A mile behind the truck, he could follow its tail light easily enough.

Harry Freed came very close to solving the mystery of Professor Cyclone that night. So close that he was half-way across the sixteen mile stretch before he saw the bridge ahead, and the lantern that lighted a big sign:

Bridge Out—End of Road

His brakes screamed an answer as he pressed the foot pedal to the floor. The bridge, he remembered, was a big job of concrete. Even as he halted, he knew instinctively that there had been no flood this spring that would move it.

After that, nothing was very clear. The car halted, its front bumpers almost touching the barricade. He could see the dim outline of the truck, its lights out, parked on the bridge. Then a flashlight was in his face.

He heard a voice, the calm voice of an old man, low, yet filled with hatred.

"You can't poke your youthful nose into the affairs of Professor Cyclone. We gave you a chance to escape, but you persisted."

He could see the snout of a long, black cane pressed into his face, then realized with horror that it wasn't a cane at all, but the open muzzle of a gun.

He felt the withering, searing flame as it struck his face and the intense, terrible agony of burning flesh. Harry Freed threw up a protecting hand, trying to force the weapon away from him. Flames enveloped his body and he could see no more.

Then in his mind, a gradual release from horror. A release that was cool and dark and everlasting. . . .

THE man on the wrecker watched the chain grow taut. He turned to Captain Deems Clark of the Michigan State Police. There was a tense expression on his face. The job of dragging submerged cars out of the water wasn't always pleasant.

"She's tight," he shouted. "Okay to start hauling?"

Clark, Sheriff Nick Beasely of Bath, and Fred Sands stood together on the Grand River Bridge. Several cars had halted and their occupants were talking excitedly in a group. A police car, the one that had brought Clark and his friends, was parked in the grove close to the river. The wrecker had its back wheels firmly anchored in the high bank by four-by-fours.

Captain Clark nodded, his thin,

browned face showing no visible emotion.

"Take it easy," he said. "We don't want to do *this* job twice."

The policeman in the wrecker shook his head.

"She's hooked tight," he said, and started the motor. The wrecker slipped into low gear, started forward in jerky movements and rolled up the bank.

Fred Sands wanted to look away. He wasn't soft, but the thought that young Freed might be in the submerged car staggered him. He watched the chain come from the water, weeds dripping from the links. Then the radiator cap and gradually the entire length of the car emerged from the river and rolled on flat tires up the bank.

The crowd of spectators started running toward the scene but the captain warned them away.

He went down the steep bank and waited until the death car was safe on high ground.

"Sands," he said. "You said Harry Freed's car was missing. That you couldn't locate him when you got back. Is this the car?"

Sands followed Beasely down the bank, walking slowly. He nodded his head. Something choked up inside him and he couldn't speak. A blackened, unrecognizable thing hung over the steering wheel of the wrecked car.

The three of them reached the side of the car. The trooper in the wrecker got out. He and his companion hurried the spectators back to the road. Clark opened the door. It was badly jammed and he had to use force. The burned bundle rolled out and hit the ground with a thud. Somewhere behind him Sands heard a woman scream in terror. A low hum of voices started. Clark swore aloud, and slipping out of his coat, he placed it quickly over the body.

Not before Sands saw the fraternity pin, its single diamond still glistening on the remains of the burned coat.

"It's Harry," he said, and turned away abruptly. None of them spoke until they reached the road once more. Clark rounded up his men.

"Get an ambulance out here and take care of the body. Have the car taken into Lansing. 'We'll go over it for clues. Damned if I know . . .'"

His voice trailed off helplessly. He walked quickly to the patrol car and waited until Sands and Nick Beasely joined him.

"**B**UT *burned*," Sands said helplessly.

"The car was in good condition. Yet Harry was burned to a crisp." He shuddered, remembering the last time they had talked together on Friday night. "I'll get the devil who did this if . . ."

"You won't have to," Nick Beasely said abruptly. "Clark and I are in on this, too. I don't know what happened back there, but someone will pay for it."

Clark started talking. He had the car up to eighty now, and they were hurtling back toward Lansing. He seemed to be reviewing things in his own mind.

"Patrol car reported tracks in the mud this morning just after daylight," he said. "You and Beasely came in and when you mentioned you'd been looking for Freed, I got the idea. Freed must have been pretty close to something. Something that made him a safer bet dead than alive."

"But how in hell did he get burned like that?" Beasely asked. "He didn't just drive into that river by himself."

Clark shook his head.

"Might have been an accident," he suggested. "After all, people do light cigarettes in their cars."

Sands shook his head.

"That's out," he said. "Harry Freed never smoked a cigarette in his life. He was checking up on Professor Waldon and he found out too much. It's up to us to find out the same thing, and keep from getting ourselves murdered."

"Professor Waldon," Beasely said in a choked voice. "We've got evidence that condemns him in our own minds, but how in hell does he do it? We've got to find that out. Professor Cyclone is a damned slick bundle."

Clark was silent for a while. He took the turn on Mount Hope Avenue and roared across the short cut toward East Lansing.

"We'll find out," he said grimly. "And God pity Professor Cyclone when we do."

"**N**O." Frances Waldon stepped away from the door and allowed Sands to enter the cottage. "Dad left last night after I went to town. You and I had a date, remember?"

Sands said he did, apologized for not keeping it, and Frances continued.

"I went out about nine. Dad said not to wait up for him. Said he had a trip to make to Ann Arbor and promised to be home today."

Sands was at a loss for words. He could hardly tell Frances what had happened to Harry Freed. What they suspected. He remained standing just inside the door.

"I—I wanted to see him," he said lamely. "I wish I could stay, but they're expecting me at school. Your Dad won't be back until late?"

Frances grasped both his hands in hers. She stared at him, a worried look springing into her eyes.

"Fred—what did I do—what did Dad do to make you stay away? You realize you're acting very strangely?"

Sands choked. He wanted to shout the whole story at her. To tell her

that Waldon, her father, was Professor Cyclone. That he had destroyed homes—had killed Harry Freed. He tried to keep his voice low.

"I'll tell you a little later," he said. "Something's come up that makes it important to see your Dad, that's all."

"Something about school?"

Sands nodded, hoping he wouldn't have to go into detail. Frances seemed vastly relieved.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but, at least it isn't as serious as your expression indicated. You *will* come in for an evening soon?"

Sands promised and left hurriedly. Once outside, he traversed the length of the street, turned on to Logan and hailed a cruising police car. Clark and Beasley were waiting for him.

"I—I feel like seven kinds of a heel, spying on that poor kid," he said, when he was in the car. "She knows nothing of what's going on. Says her father left for Ann Arbor last night. Doesn't expect him back until later today."

Beasley nodded.

"It's like tracing a turtle in a swamp," he said disgustedly. "The farmers who have paid him money won't talk. We don't know what he's up to, so how can we catch him?"

Captain Clark was threading the car swiftly through traffic.

"I'm not so sure of that," he said. "A few minutes ago the East Lansing office turned in a report that a heavy storm had hit along Grand River just outside Eaton Rapids. Half a dozen houses were blown down. Three people killed outright."

The car was moving swiftly toward the outskirts of town. They hit the pavement behind a tractor, roared around it on two wheels and Clark pushed the gas pedal to the floor. The three of them were silent until the car straightened itself out.

Sands released his grip on the door handle.

"You think Professor Cyclone may have something to do with it?"

Clark didn't answer but Beasley grunted.

"Maybe opening up a new field for his protection agency," he said.

"Harry Freed was killed on this road," Clark said coolly. "He was driving toward Eaton Rapids. Now a storm has destroyed an entire section in the same direction. That could mean that Freed was stopped while following the professor."

The miles were clicking away smoothly. On the wide drive near the bridge where Harry Freed had died, a huge truck passed them, going in the opposite direction. Along the side of the trailer were the words, *Eastern Trucking*.

Harry Freed had known something about that truck and its passenger. Something that might have been a key to the mystery of Professor Cyclone.

Harry Freed was dead and Professor Cyclone was headed safely toward home.

CAPTAIN DEEMS CLARK guided the police car carefully down the rutted road, following heavy tire treads that had already dug deep into the soft clay.

"I understand it's only a small section," he said meaningly. "About eight houses, like that first small storm at Bath."

Beasley growled something about, "Only a beginning," and Fred Sands frowned.

"That's the way Professor Cyclone seems to operate," he said. "He scares the daylight out of some, then comes in and collects the dough from the rest."

Sands was worried about something. Something he had noticed this morn-

ing in the heavy dust along the edge of the bridge. Tire tread marks. Marks that a heavy truck would make if parked there. Someone may have had tire trouble and used the broad concrete strip to change a tire. But that didn't satisfy him.

They were five miles into the back country now. Sands wondered why a large truck had come in here. Had chosen this narrow, dead-end country road. Even as he was worrying about this, he noticed that the tire marks turned off abruptly into a corn field.

"It must be only a short way now to where the storm struck," he said.

Clark turned quickly.

"Just over the next hill," he said. "How did you know?"

Sands wondered himself. It was a long shot, but worth a gamble.

"I've got an idea," he said. "Drop me off here and pick me up when you come back."

Clark stopped the car without hesitation. Sands climbed out into the road.

"We're going to find out if Professor Cyclone came through here before the storm," Clark said grimly. "It won't take more than half an hour."

"Good." Sands stood away from the car and Deems Clark started the motor. "I'll try to be here. If I'm not, wait for me."

"Damned if I wouldn't like to know what you got on your mind." Nick Beasley scratched his ear. "So far, I can't get a glimmer."

Sands shook his head.

"Probably I'm all wet," he admitted, "But, if I'm not, I'll tell you everything when you come back."

Clark's car moved over a little rise and dropped out of sight into the valley beyond. Sands turned, walked back several hundred feet to the spot where the truck wheels entered the field. He wondered if the trail ended behind some

farmer's tractor. Still, he'd seen tires like these before. They weren't usually used on anything but the big jobs.

The trail led clearly down a small lane, turned and skirted the corn field. Carefully Sands followed it through a small woodlot. Ahead of him he could see where the truck had parked. Several two-by-fours had been pushed under the wheels. The grass was covered with grease. The limbs of trees had been snapped off about ten feet from the ground.

That indicated that a large truck had come through here. But why had it parked back here in the woods?

THEN the full meaning of his discovery flashed on Sands. To the west, in the direction Captain Deems Clark had driven, every tree, every bush was uprooted and flung in the opposite direction from which the truck had been parked.

A giant wind machine!

No, that was impossible. No fan in the world would create a cyclone. Yet, Professor Waldon—or Cyclone, as he seemed to delight in calling himself—had always been interested in wind currents and what caused them. He had succeeded in breaking down and controlling atoms. Thus he had tremendous energy at his disposal. Had he succeeded in inventing a machine so compact that it would fit into a truck, and yet so powerful that it could stir up high and low pressure areas strong enough that a twister might result?

With Professor Waldon, it might not be impossible. Fred Sands remembered him as a man well ahead of his colleagues in every branch of his field.

But the truck?

It was fairly clear in Sands' mind now that whatever Cyclone possessed in the manner of machinery was housed

in the body of a huge truck. A truck large enough to sink deeply into the field and high enough to knock branches off well above the ground.

He was disturbed from his thoughts by the sound of Captain Clark's horn blowing back on the road.

He hurried back across the field.

"Find out anything from the farmers?" he asked, before Nick Beasley could question him.

Clark nodded.

"I'll give you the story. It's short and not sweet. All seven men who lost their farms last night had met Professor Cyclone and refused to pay him money. Now, what's your story?"

Sands frowned.

"I want to stop on the Grand River Bridge when we get there," he said. "Then I think I can give you the whole story, at least as far as it goes."

IN TEN minutes the police car drew up on the opposite side of the bridge from the spot Fred Sands had discovered the tire tracks. The three men crossed the concrete. Sands bent low over the dust and sand that had been thrown aside by passing wheels. The tracks were still clear, but very faint. The tread was identical to the one he had followed into the field. He straightened.

"I'm sorry I had to be the one to find this," he said, and he meant it. "I hate to do anything that will harm Frances Waldon, but I think we're ready to close in on the professor."

Clark was on his haunches studying the wheel marks.

"I'll be damned," he said, as understanding dawned on his face. "Those heavy tracks on the road back there? The same ones?"

Sands nodded.

"I think I've got it figured out," he said. "Professor Cyclone must have

some sort of a wind-making machine mounted in the trailer of that truck. Last night Harry Freed followed him out here. Cyclone knew he was being followed. He doused his lights and parked in the darkness on the side of the bridge. Somehow he stopped Harry's car, recognized him and killed Harry. He pushed the car into the river. Then he drove into that field, hid in the woods and started a disturbance that caused that cyclone.

"Do you remember that as we were driving toward Eaton Rapids we passed an Eastern Trucking job headed for Lansing?"

Clark nodded.

"Faintly," he said. "About here, wasn't it?"

Sands nodded.

"Eastern Trucking runs only one truck through here. It stops at the woollen mill in Eaton Rapids. Call them and find out if a truck stopped there this morning. If it didn't, we've got our party. We'll have to locate an Eastern Trucking job with a tire pattern like this one here and back in the field."

Beasley started muttering under his breath.

"Sounds reasonable, doesn't it, Sheriff?" Clark asked.

Beasley exploded with indignation.

"Me, I been sheriff at Bath for thirty years," he said. "Damned if that truck couldn't have run over me, and I'd never guess what it was for. What the hell we waiting for? Get those tire patterns photographed, check with Eaton Rapids and let's go to work."

THE Eastern Trucking outfit at Lansing was located on a back street near the river. Captain Clark was well known to the warehouse boss and garage mechanics. In fifteen minutes he had checked every tread in

the outfit. Discouraged, he straightened from the last wheel and faced the blackened, overalled chief mechanic. Sands and Nick Beasley were waiting in the office.

"None of the trucks has gone out last night or this morning?"

The mechanic checked with his work sheet.

"Grand Rapids and Detroit trailers hauled in this morning. You've checked them both. Nothing went out last night except the truck to Chicago. I called long distance. It got in there right on the nose. Checked in at every way-station on time. No sir, Captain, it couldn't have been one of our trucks."

"But the name, man? It was printed just the same way these are."

The mechanic shrugged.

"That would be easy," he said. "Any one trying to copy us could do that job. You take when a man stops driving for us, for example. We give him a buck so's he can paint out our name the first thing. Some of 'em don't do it for a long time. We have to sic the cops on them sometimes. If a driver gets in an accident and is using our name, the insurance company comes down on us like a ton of bricks."

Clark nodded.

"By the same token, if a crook was using your name for bootlegging or something worse, he'd be able to push a lot of suspicion in your direction?"

The mechanic nodded.

"That's right. Now you take just last month, one of our men quit. I know for a fact that he didn't repaint his truck. He's a farmer northeast of here. I talked with him this afternoon, and he said he's been busy putting in late crops. Promised to have the name changed right away."

"You saw him—here—this afternoon?" Clark's eyes narrowed.

"Downtown," the mechanic corrected him. "Says he drove down to Detroit for a load of last year's corn."

Clark grasped the other man's arm tightly.

"His name?" he said. "What's his name and address?"

The mechanic frowned.

"Freed," he said. "Yeah, that's it. Jack Freed. Owns some land over near Bath. Quite a lot of farmers own trucks and drive for us part time."

CAPTAIN DEEMS CLARK seemed in danger of blowing up. His face turned a chalky white and his lips straightened into a firm bloodless line.

"Why in hell . . .?" he started slowly. Then, "Jack Freed! Well, what do you make of that?"

Sheriff Nick Beasley and Fred Sands were waiting anxiously in the office when Clark went in. Clark went directly to the phone, dialed East Lansing and contacted the radio man.

"Browne," he said in a queer tight voice. "I want you to put out a state wide alarm. Pull every man off his regular route and start him scouring the back roads. I want to pick up a truck." A moment of hesitation and Clark smiled a little grimly. "Yes, I know there are lots of trucks. This one will either be well hidden in some barn or back street around Lansing or it will be on the highway. If it's on the highway, it will be splashed with fresh paint. Yeah! If they find a freshly painted truck, have them dig underneath to the original color. The words *Eastern Trucking* will be hidden under the fresh stuff. Got that?"

He listened carefully until the message had been repeated back.

"Yes," he said. "That's all, but give it everything you've got."

He hung up and turned to Beasley.

"Got something?" the sheriff asked.

"Plenty," Clark said. "Sheriff, how did Jack Freed come out in that cyclone damage? Was he insured?"

Beasley's eyebrows lifted.

"Perfect," he said hesitantly. "That is, he wasn't covered by insurance so far as I know. Seemed to have some money saved. He's all built up again. The house is better than ever."

Clark nodded his head.

"The others?"

"Well," Beasley went on, "not so good, most of them. Lot of them poor farmers up there. Don't know what some of them would have done if the Red Cross hadn't stepped in."

Clark had entered some notes in his notebook. He put the book back into his pocket and started tapping the top of the desk with his pencil.

"Didn't it ever seem funny to you, Sheriff, that Freed could put his son through college the hard way, and yet have money to start rebuilding so soon?"

Beasley shook his head.

"Never gave it much thought," he admitted.

CLARK slipped the pencil into his pocket, brushed his knees where he had been kneeling on the garage floor and started for the door.

"Jack Freed," he said over his shoulder, "used to drive for Eastern Trucking. He was here in town this morning. I think I've got a pretty good idea where he was last night."

"Wait a minute." Sands had caught up with the Captain. They stood at the curb as Clark inserted the key into the car door. "If Freed was on that truck, he wouldn't kill his own son."

"That bothers me a little," Clark admitted. "But Professor Cyclone had to have a driver and a helper to get him around the country. He had Freed

behind a very bad eightball. Suppose this machine would look a little odd to haul down the highway in an open car. Suppose Cyclone found out Freed had a truck and offered him more money than he had ever seen before to mount the machine in his truck and become a partner? If Freed was driving last night and Cyclone killed young Freed, perhaps his father couldn't tell who the man in the car was?"

"Don't sound like Jack Freed," Nick said. "Not killing his own son."

Deems Clark climbed behind the wheel.

"No," he said slowly. "Freed might go a long way to make money, but if Cyclone killed his son, Jack Freed is going to do a lot of thinking when the State Journal releases the story of Harry Freed's murder in the afternoon edition. I think, Sheriff, there'll be some fireworks around Bath when Freed reads that paper. Maybe we ought to be there."

"Maybe," Beasley said, and got into the car quickly. Fred Sands hesitated, then backed away.

"I think," he said, "I'll take another angle, if you don't mind. Frances Waldon has to know about this sooner or later. It's reached the point where I'd better have a talk with her."

His voice was flat, emotionless. Clark stared at the younger man with unmasked pity in his eyes.

"That's your business," he said. "I'm sorry, Sands, that you had to get mixed up in this."

Sands stiffened.

"I'm not," he said. "I've helped and I'm damned glad of it. Professor Cyclone has it coming to him. Harry Freed was a good friend of mine. I think Frances will understand. Good luck! I'll try to get to Bath if you need me."

"We won't," Clark said, and stepped on the starter. "We'll have a police net around the center of the state that will catch the man we want. No one's going to get hurt, unless he's got it coming to him."

"MEN," Captain Deems Clark said, "we're ready for the roundup."

He hesitated, removing a stack of typed reports from Sheriff Nick Beasley's desk, and placing them before him. Beasley's office was overflowing with Michigan state police. They stood in lines around the room, some of them making notations as the captain spoke. Nick himself, a little bewildered at entertaining so many uniformed men in his office, sat near Clark. His eyes were focused on a large fly that buzzed outside the screen.

"We've found our men, and we know how to trap them. We've taken a day to set that trap. The difficulty in making the trap work is this: Professor Waldon is undoubtedly the man we are after. We've traced him carefully from the first. Our trouble lies in proving beyond doubt that Professor Waldon, or Cyclone, as he calls himself, is responsible for these storms that have ravaged parts of the state. A man like Professor Cyclone hasn't any heart in his body. If he escapes us this time, God knows when we'll get another chance. He has a machine. What it does we all know. How in hell it does it, I don't even dare to guess. Needless to say, if he suspects us, he'll turn the power of that thing loose and destroy any man who comes near him."

Clark stopped, picked up the first sheet of his file and turned it over.

"Don't mistake this as a routine assignment," he continued. "We've talked with ten farmers just outside Bath. They've all been approached by Cyclone and they've all paid him money

for protection. I've used the power of the entire force to make them come over to our side. I've promised them that if they defy Cyclone and make him carry out his threat to destroy their homes, we'll catch Cyclone before he can act. Is that clear?"

A murmur of assent arose and Clark continued.

"Every road is watched. Cyclone can't move anything into the district without us spotting him. When he does, we'll check on every move and close in before he has a chance to use this invention of his. Every man knows his post. All of you hold the fate of these farmers in your hands. It's up to you to see that their homes remain intact. Any questions?"

A sigh of agreement, then silence again as though every man had heard enough and was ready to get started.

"All right," Clark said. "Dismissed. Leave the building in pairs. Spread out and make yourselves scarce. I don't want Cyclone to get a tip-off on what's going to happen."

FRED SANDS drove slowly down LaPeer Street in Lansing, until he reached the green bungalow where Professor Waldon and his daughter lived. He went up the steps to the porch and knocked on the door. No answer. Sands tried again, then went around the house and tried the back door. The house was locked up tightly.

Discouraged, he was about to leave when he noticed a slip of paper under the back door. He reached down, picked it up and his face registered disgust. A milk bill.

He was about to replace it under the door when he saw the faint tracing in the printed side of the bill. Turning it over he noticed two words traced hurriedly on the blank side. Someone had used a sharp instrument, perhaps a long

finger nail to trace the message: Bath. Hurry!

That could mean only one thing. The Professor had gone to Bath. Frances had either been forced, or had volunteered to go with him. Her message indicated danger—fear.

Frances, Sands thought with a measure of relief, must know more than he had guessed. She was with her father now. Only he, Fred Sands, would be expected here by Frances Waldon. Then the message was meant for him and written hurriedly when the professor hadn't suspected. He folded the note quickly, pushed it into his coat pocket and ran to the car. By county roads Bath was only a few miles northeast of Lansing. But how would he know where to look when he got there?

Sands gave the car everything it could take, settled back behind the wheel and prayed that he wouldn't be stopped. When he passed East Grand River Avenue on Highway 27, the speedometer read eighty-five. He didn't stop for lights. A fine would be much easier to handle than another possible murder. There was no doubt in Fred Sands' mind that Frances was in grave danger.

Professor Cyclone had murdered once. He was crazy. Crazy in a cold, scientific way that made even the murder of his own daughter possible. Frances Waldon had learned too much about her father's work.

PROFESSOR WALDON was speechless with rage. A great change had come over him since that first visit to Jack Freed. A change that brought an ugly glitter to the mild eyes and left his lips parted so that the yellow teeth were always visible. He backed away from the man on the tractor, his hand clenched around the grip of his cane, blood drained from his face.

"You—you dare defy me after what has happened to the others?"

Clare Cragg had been farming his eighty for a good many years. Right now he wasn't quite sure of himself. He wondered if Captain Deems Clark of the state police could really give him the protection he had promised. Cragg wasn't a man to go back on his promise to the law. He leaned over from his seat on the tractor and stared into Waldon's fiery eyes.

"I already paid you three thousand bucks to leave me alone." He remembered Captain Clark's orders. "You see, Professor, a bunch of us farmers has got together. We figure them cyclones was natural. That you didn't have nothing to do with them. You're just collecting dough under false pretences and none of us is gonna pay."

He hoped, as he watched the little man in the dark coat get ready to shout again, that he had made the story sound right. It wouldn't do for the Professor to know he was laying a trap.

Professor Cyclone seemed to shrink away from the tractor. A rage had taken hold inside him. A rage that made him burn with hate for the entire world.

"You can't fight me." His voice was deadly calm. "No one can fight me. If I wanted to I could destroy you all."

His words rose gradually until he was screaming. "I could destroy the state, the country. Perhaps the world."

Cragg had a hard time to act then. He chuckled and he flattered himself that it sounded like the real thing.

"Go ahead," he invited. "Play God. Tear the hell out of us. It oughta be something to see!"

"It will be!" Professor Cyclone shouted. "I'll—I'll break every . . ."

He fell abruptly silent, turned on his heel and hurried across the yard toward the road.

Cragg started the tractor and rolled away across the field. He thought he caught the movement of someone in the car that Cyclone was driving. He couldn't be sure, but it looked like a woman's hat.

FRED SANDS reached the Bath Road where it branched off Highway 27. As he slowed for the turn, two state policemen stepped from the bushes with stubby sub-machine guns. Sands stopped, then recognized one of the officers who had helped pull Harry Freed's car from Grand River.

"We meet again," he said.

The cop looked doubtful. Then he grinned, lowered the gun and offered his hand.

"Cap tells me you're getting to be quite a detective," he said; then, to his companion: "Put down the tommy-gun, Pete. This is Fred Sands I was telling you about."

Pete Shilland came forward, grasped Sand's hand, then stood at one side, his eyes on the road behind.

"Say," Sands said, "what's the game? Get a lineup on something?"

His friend with the tommy-gun looked puzzled.

"Ain't you heard? Cap Clark's setting a trap for this Cyclone guy. A lot of farmers have told the old boy they ain't giving any more money. When he cracks down, we'll be there to get him."

Sands sat still, thinking.

"You didn't see an old Ford, about a 1932 model, pass here earlier in the day?"

Pete Shilland looked around a little startled.

"Sure," he said. "Sure we stopped one. Girl driving and a nice-looking old gent sitting with her. Remember, Ed?"

Ed scratched his chin.

"Damned if I don't!" He flashed a

startled look at Sands. "Why?"

"First," Sands asked, "tell me what time they went by, what you said to them and anything you can remember about the pair."

Pete Shilland stepped closer to the car.

"I remembered 'em because they passed just at noon. I was eating a sandwich at the time we stopped them."

"Yeah," Ed offered, "that's right. The girl said they were going north. Had a farm up there somewhere. The old guy wanted to ask a lot of questions and all that. Wondered why we were here."

"Yes," Sands said. "I should think he might. What did you tell him?"

"Cap Clark said we were to tell any one who asked that we were looking for a bank robber from Detroit. We got a fake description and everything."

"And you didn't have a description of the old man in the car?"

A light of understanding started to dawn in Ed's eyes. He stared at Shilland and then back at Sands.

"You don't mean that nice old gent might have been . . ."

"No might's about it," Sands said. "You let Professor Cyclone go through the blockade. I only hope to God that he didn't suspect!"

"I'll be damned!" Shilland was shocked. "The girl must have thrown us off. She didn't look like a crook."

"That's what I hope," Sands said, and there was a prayer in his voice. "Was Professor Cyclone carrying a cane?"

Ed nodded.

"Sure, he looked kinda feeble."

Sands' smile was a little strained.

"He had that cane handy when he was talking, didn't he?"

It was Shilland's turn.

"Yeah, got out of the car and stood there while he talked with us. Reached

up and flecked a piece of lint off my shoulder."

"I thought so," Sands said. "If you see that cane again, you'd better go in with your tommy-gun* wide open. Harry Freed died with the snout of that cane in his face. If you'd given the wrong answer this noon, you might both be dead now."

"God," Ed said, and looked as though he was going to be sick. "I'd better radio Cap right away."

He turned and ran back into the brush where the prowler car was hidden.

Shilland continued to stare at Sands, his hand creeping to the spot on his shoulder where the cane had tapped him. His hand was shaking.

"You mean the guy that was burned to death? That cane did it?"

"Only a guess," Sands answered. "But I think, on the strength of what happened here, it's a good one. You might as well follow me into Bath. You're no good here."

"Yeah!" Shilland still had that far-away look in his eyes. "I guess we better. Things should start popping over there, huh?"

"Popping isn't the word for it," Sands said with ice in his voice. "I'll see you at Bath."

It took him just a quarter of a mile to reach eighty-five. The car took the road like a swallow.

"**WAITING!**" Captain Clark said in disgust. "I'm getting damned tired of it."

He strode the length of Beasley's office, and slumped down into a chair.

"No more reports since I came in?" Fred Sands asked.

They had been sitting in the darkened room since seven. The clock, outlined by a light that reflected from across the street, read twelve-twenty-five. After midnight, and no news.

"No more," Clark said. "Nick, what in hell are we going to do?"

Nick Beasley stirred as though he had just awakened. That wasn't true. He had sat very still over his desk, dreaming of what could happen to those poor devils who had defied Cyclone. Wondering where the storm would strike.

"Damned if I know, Deems," he said in a dispirited voice. "Damned if . . ."

"Well." Sands stood up. "I'm doing something right now. I'm going to look over Jack Freed's place. The last we heard, this man Cragg reported that Cyclone left his farm and that there was a girl with him. There are two possibilities that don't sound very pleasant. Freed might have murdered Cyclone when he found out what happened to Harry."

"Possibly," Clark said, "but more likely Cyclone took care of Freed if the old man got tough. I've got three hundred men within a radius of ten miles of here. Why in hell don't some of them report at least one suspicious action?"

"Then there's that truck," Beasley said. "It's got to get through the blockade . . ."

"Wait." Sands walked to the door. He had tried desperately to push Frances Waldon from his mind long enough to think clearly. "The truck. It belonged to Jack Freed and he had no reason to suspect that we'd traced it to him."

Sands whirled on Clark.

"At what time did you establish the police blockade, Captain?"

"About eleven this morning," Clark said. "You . . . don't think . . . ?"

"Why couldn't he have driven up here last night and hidden the truck in the first place he'd normally think of, his own barn?"

"That's right!" Beasley shot to his feet. "Freed rebuilt his barn in a hell of a hurry. There'd be plenty of room."

Clark drew his pistol from the holster, squinted at it as he snapped the chambers around, then slipped it back.

"We won't wait any longer," he said. "The car outside can get in touch with me by radio. We're paying a quiet visit to Jack Freed."

JACK FREED, holding a folded newspaper in his hand, stormed across the back yard and into the new barn. Parked at the far end of the structure was his big, newly painted truck. Beside it, small and dilapidated, was Professor Cyclone's Ford. Freed felt white hot anger inside him. Unreasoning anger that clenched his fists and made his mind turn back swiftly to his first experience with the professor.

Fred ran across the newly laid floor toward the truck. Cyclone was a damned little liar. A cheap, two-bit murderer. He had somehow found out that Freed had a truck. He had come to Freed after that first storm and offered him ten thousand dollars for the use of the truck with Freed himself to drive it. Freed had no choice. Besides, it looked like nice business. He could rebuild his farm and have a job again. All he had to do was drive, see nothing and keep his mouth shut.

But that night outside of Lansing when he had parked on the bridge. Freed knew Cyclone killed a man that night. If he had only known that it was his own son who had died. He had never seen Harry's car. The boy bought it in Lansing.

Fred shuddered. He couldn't have been expected to recognize Harry's body, not the way it was . . .

He shook his massive head slowly. A small, neat door had been built into the side of the trailer. Freed opened it,

stepped upon a box and went inside. He closed the door, the bright lights within blinding him for a second. Then, leaning back against the closed door, his eyes widened.

"What the hell?" he said. "You got a girl here?"

One entire side of the trailer was fitted neatly with banks of switch controls. Large and small tubes sent forth a faint glimmer of light, and gauges evidently meant to record certain air pressures. In the back end, heavy, lead tanks, reaching to the ceiling, looked like oversized sausages. Professor Cyclone had been seated at a small desk, his back to the door. Frances Waldon sat at the front end of the trailer, her legs and arms bound to a chair. She seemed bewildered, unable to understand what had happened.

Professor Cyclone turned slowly, a foolish grin on his face.

"The girl? Oh yes, my daughter. Well, you see, Freed, my daughter has finally found out what a powerful, what a *very* powerful man her father is. She wasn't safe left alone. Now she isn't safe anywhere. Frankly, I'm wondering just what to do with her, Freed."

Freed tried to suppress a shudder. The old guy was nuts all along, but now he was getting simple. Simple, but dangerous.

"Look," he said. "I'm all done with this. What the hell you and your kid do ain't my business. I'm finished."

Professor Cyclone grinned. It was a wolf's grin, without humor. His eyes glistened in the light. He turned full around, his cane resting on his knees.

"So," he said, "you are going to quit? Who told you you could? When did you make all these plans?"

FREED whipped the newspaper from behind him. He held it close to Cyclone, so that Harry Freed's picture

was close to the old man's eyes.

"BODY FOUND IN GRAND RIVER," Freed said with emotion shaking his voice. "You know who put it there, don't you, Professor?"

Cyclone swore.

"The meddling fools," he said. Then he regained his former calm. "Why Jack, of course I know. We both put it there. You wouldn't want anyone to know you killed your own son?"

Freed lost his temper completely.

"You crazy, goddam loon!" He lunged forward.

Too late. He heard Frances Waldon scream and felt red hot flame searing his face. He clutched at his eyes, moaning and fell forward on the floor. The flame stopped eating at him. He heard Professor Cyclone chuckle.

"You never felt the power of my cane, did you, Freed? Harry felt it."

Freed continued to roll on the floor, sobbing with pain, his fingers clawing at the scorched, raw flesh on his face.

Frances Waldon started to struggle, trying to release herself from the chair. Professor Cyclone went to her side. He stood looking down at the girl. Any pity or love he may have had for her had vanished. He was completely, terribly, calm.

"You little fool!" He slapped her face. "Sit still or I'll give you the same treatment."

He pointed the cane at her. Frances waited, suddenly motionless.

"You're insane," she said. "Completely insane."

Professor Cyclone chuckled. He turned and limped back to the desk. Once in his chair, he faced them: the girl and the faceless, writhing object on the floor.

"A fine pair, you two. You dare defy the most powerful man on earth. Fools."

He toyed with a chart he had picked

up from the desk top.

"Today a few men also defied me." He was speaking as though to himself. "I am powerful enough to wipe an entire state from the map. Yet they laugh at me."

He took the chart with him, pushed the chair to the opposite side of the trailer and sat down before a board covered with switches and dials.

"Professor Cyclone has only started," he murmured. "Perhaps, Frances, you remember that I always had an uncanny understanding of wind storms and how they were formed? A cyclone is comparatively simple. A violent wind blowing spirally inward from a large high pressure area to a small calm area where the barometric pressure is low. You couldn't understand that. You couldn't understand how by the use of the cosmic rays, the atoms of the atmosphere could be so directed by radio that they would produce such a storm. Yet, in those energy tanks, I can build up a storm that, if stirred up in full force, would cut a swath of terror through the entire country."

He watched the girl's eyes widen in terror.

"Don't be frightened, girl," he said. "Tonight I will destroy only those who defied me this afternoon. You are safe. I may have to keep you prisoner until you see things my way. After that, we will both be safe from fools like Freed who think they can fight Professor Cyclone."

DURING this time, Jack Freed had grown quiet. He lay on his back, sightless eyes turned upward. Frances looked at him once, then turned away quickly.

"You do not like the handiwork of my little weapon?" The professor chuckled. "Neither did Harry, his son. I'm an old man, Frances. That cane

is another smaller touch of my genius. A combination of atomic pellets that when exploded, force burning energy from the barrel. It proves handy, especially because such a weapon is completely unsuspected."

He watched his daughter anxiously for a minute, then seeing that his talents were wasted on her, turned away with an exclamation of disgust.

He leaned over the controls and turned a switch on the board. At once the trailer was alive with a low hum. It built up gradually as they sat there, until a steady roaring sound came from the valves on the lead storage tanks. At last, seemingly satisfied, Cyclone started to regulate the dials, checking the map-chart carefully as he did so.

"Energy can be hurled in any direction," he said as he worked. "These dials, set according to a carefully prepared chart, will send a storm into any given area. I can pick out one acre of land if I wish, send a cyclone tearing into it, then make it lift into the sky to spend itself after that acre has been laid to waste."

The girl was fascinated in spite of herself. She leaned forward in her chair.

"You—you *can't* destroy again. Please Dad, think of those men, their families. Their farms are all they have in the world."

Tears of genuine pity were in her eyes.

"Shut up," the old man snapped. "I know now that it would be better to put you out of the way. Perhaps, after I finish . . ."

The sound within the trailer was steady now, drowning out any other noise. The tubes, some of them hardly larger than a finger tip, others two feet in length, were in rows, according to size. The largest ranged against the floor of the truck. The smallest were

up close to the roof. All of them were flashing steadily as though the power had now reached every filament.

"There will be no violence here," Cyclone shouted above the sound. "You need not be frightened when the air becomes suddenly dry. There will be a vacuum for a second, then plenty of air to breath. It will be hot and dry. The force will generate in the air where I have set the dials. It will start several miles from here."

Frances remained silent, still as a carved figure.

Cyclone's slim fingers reached for the release buttons.

They paused in midair, and he whirled in his chair, coming to his feet with the cane aimed at the door.

FRANCES had not heard the door open. Now she saw the crouched figure of Fred Sands standing in direct line with the cane muzzle.

A scream of terror escaped her lips, but it was drowned in the noise that the cyclone generator made. She did not see Jack Freed come to his knees slowly behind the tense form of Professor Cyclone. Freed knew who was in that doorway. He could see Cyclone through a mist of suffering. He knew that Cyclone would release flame in Sand's face at any moment.

Cyclone's arm jerked up. His fingers closed about the grip, just as the crashing force took him behind the knees. He went down like a rock, the cane flying from his hand, a scream of fear on his lips.

The cane struck the bank of tubes and at once the humming of the cyclone storage tanks stopped. The circuit was broken. Glass shattered against glass.

"Get the hell out of there!" It was Captain Deems Clark shouting from somewhere outside the barn. "Here she comes."

Frances tried to struggle out of the chair and fell forward with its weight on top of her. She saw Sands run towards her, felt his fingers fumbling hurriedly with the rope.

Her father was screaming. He was on his back, Freed's arms grasped firmly around his waist. The two of them rolled over and over the length of the trailer.

Nick Beasley's head poked in the door. He was scared. His lips moved but little sound escaped them.

"No time . . . hell to pay . . ."

Frances was free now. She felt Fred's arms around her a second before he jumped from the door of the trailer and hit the barn floor on the run. She buried her head in his chest, feeling his heart pounding as he reached the barn door.

She wondered why he didn't put her down. Then, daring to open her eyes once more, she saw the funnelshaped twisting cloud that was tearing toward them across the field and a scream parted her lips.

Sands was trying to reach the house. The wind tore at them pushing them away from the door.

Deems Clark appeared around the corner of the house and pushed them inside.

"The cellar," he shouted, but his words were whipped away before they could hear him.

Sands reached the cellar stairs and stumbled down them. He put Frances on her feet. With Clark's help, they managed to reach the cellar wall closest to the onrushing cyclone. Beasley had got there safely and was staring with wild eyes out the broken cellar window.

"Good God," Beaseley's voice was filled with awe. "Look! Out there!"

Professor Cyclone had managed to

escape Fred. He had reached the yard and was trying to make his way across it. He had his cane once more, using it to pull himself forward as he lay flat on the ground. The professor had reached a point half way between the house and the barn. He lay flat on his face, the cane pushed deep into the soft turf. His face was pressed to the grass.

The funnel of the cyclone rushed forward, debris twisting about in its black center. It reached the yard, pounced on Professor Cyclone's body and sucked it up into the air.

Professor Cyclone didn't seem powerful any more. He was no more than a straw, picked up with coattails waving wildly, and tossed with terrible force against the barn. Then the barn itself crushed in, and with a thunderous roar, ripped apart, board by board.

In the blink of an eye Professor Cyclone, the barn itself and all that remained of Cyclone's invention were broadcast like seed across the field.

THEN the wind was gone and the air was still and electric, accenting the tiniest noise. Sands turned to Deems Clark and saw that the captain's eyes were on something across the way.

The captain was viewing the last resting place of Professor Cyclone. His frail old body was firmly enmeshed in a chicken-wire fence on the far side of the field. The cane, clutched in one stiffened hand, hung down as though to keep him from falling.

Sands helped Frances Waldon to her feet, burying her tear-stained face against his shoulder.

"That was one cyclone," he said in a low voice, "that the Professor hadn't planned on."

★ ★ ★ **BUY MORE BONDS!** ★ ★ ★

JONES BUYS WAR BLONDES

By ELROY ARNO

**When the boss orders something
that doesn't exist, there's only one
thing to do: manufacture it for him!**

MR. FOX, president of Fox and Laird Advertising Agency stepped out of his office and made queer, officious-sounding noises in his throat. The office staff immediately came to attention. Mr. Fox smiled a pleasant good morning, flexed a little finger at Willowby Jones and motioned for him to come in.

Willowby swallowed his Adam's-apple and blushed modestly. Mr. Fox had certainly been good to him since that last job for Barker Whiskey. Willowby stood up, placed his pen in the rack and smiled at Bernice Adams who sent him an adoring look across the width of the office. He walked quite firmly toward Mr. Fox's office, yet with that sinking feeling in his stomach that came whenever he had to face the great man alone.

Willowby opened the door of the inner sanctum, stepped inside and waited. Mr. Fox was hard at work, as though he had already forgotten Willowby. Willowby Jones cleared his throat hesitantly.

"You—wished to see me, Mr. Fox?"

Fox looked up, smiled hesitantly as though he had forgotten, then nodded.

"Oh, yes! Sit down, Jones."

Willowby crossed the room and settled himself on the edge of a large leather chair. The clock ticked loudly on the wall. Mr. Fox's pen scratched across the bottom of a letter, then went to rest in the inkwell. Mr. Fox picked up a roll of paper from his desk and used it as a pointer to punctuate his message.

"Willowby, we need a thousand blondes."

Willowby swallowed and his face turned pink.

"Did you say—er—that is, blondes or bonds, sir?"

Fox looked impatient.

"Blondes, women, pretty girls."

Willowby sighed.

"Yes sir," he agreed. "I—I guess we do."

Mr. Fox cleared his throat.

"You don't quite understand," he said. "I've taken on a new advertising scheme for *Barbarous Blonde Hair Dye, Inc.* We've planned a campaign. I'll have a thousand lovely young ladies photographed on a gigantic stage. They all have to be young, beautiful and blonde. Nice start, don't you think?"

Willowby gulped.



Under the brilliant rays, Bernice's hair began to change color

"You want me . . ."

Mr. Fox was intent on business.

"... to locate the young ladies, Jones. Place an ad in the paper, make the rounds of the model agencies and let's have those young ladies ready for the picture tomorrow morning."

Willowby was staring hard at the wall behind Mr. Fox's head. He wondered just how many blondes there were in town. He hadn't seen very many. At least nothing to approach the figure Mr. Fox suggested.

"Do you — that is — anticipate any difficulty in finding that many?"

Fox looked grim.

"Nothing to it, Jones," he said. "Now, on the job and have those girls tomorrow morning. It will cost money, but there's a lot of it in this scheme."

Willowby Jones realized that he had not come with a properly prepared defense. There was nothing to do about it, nothing but find a thousand honey-haired young women before morning. Mr. Fox wasn't accustomed to having his plans disputed.

"Yes sir." Willowby stood up. His knees were wobbling strangely.

"I'll—I'll go to work on it at once," he said.

THE interview with Mr. Fox had taken place at two in the afternoon. In the next five hours, Willowby tracked the elusive blonde to its lair in every section of town. He visited every agency and spoke to every young steno who had golden tresses and a lunch hour that coincided with Mr. Jones' search. He walked every street and placed ads in every paper. At seven that evening, Willowby had, in sheer desperation, rounded up exactly ten naturals and six reasonable facsimiles. To put it tersely, Willowby was on the verge of going blonde blind.

He would have to meet Bernice

Adams at seven. He had promised that they would stop at Henrici's for dinner, and there was no alibi that would protect him, much less a plea that he must spend the hours ahead searching for blonde women.

Bernice was waiting in a quiet corner of the restaurant. Willowby placed his hat carefully on the rack, smoothed his hair and sat down.

"Willowby Jones, where have you been all afternoon? We all saw Mr. Fox talking with you. When you went out right away, everyone wondered."

Willowby shook his head.

"Blondes," he said with deep feeling.

"What in the world . . .?"

"I've been looking for blondes. Mr. Fox says I have to find a thousand of them, all beautiful."

Bernice dropped the menu she had been studying, reached over and felt of Willowby's forehead.

"Willowby, darling! You're sure you feel quite well?"

Willowby shuddered.

"No I don't," he admitted. "Not by a darn sight."

He attempted a clearer explanation. When he had finished, Bernice looked very unhappy.

"But Willowby, there isn't a lovely blonde in town."

Willowby detected a touch of jealousy in her voice, and made the mistake of ignoring it.

"Oh, yes there is," he insisted. "I found a few of them, but not nearly enough."

"Next you'll be telling me you prefer blondes to me," Bernice pouted. "Do you?"

The thought had never occurred to Willowby.

Stark horror mirrored itself in his eyes.

"Oh dear, no," he said with great feeling. "I'm beginning to hate them."

The waiter came, orders were taken and they spent several minutes holding hands.

"You can't possibly find a thousand blondes before tomorrow, not even if there were a million dollars involved."

A violent crash came from the next table. They both turned to survey a slight, stoop-shouldered gentleman with neat white mustache who was picking up the remnants of a broken water glass. Something about the friendly washed-out eyes and the sad look in the stranger's face interested Willowby. He stared.

"Did—that is—did she say a million dollars?"

Willowby, naturally friendly, smiled unhappily.

"Yes," he admitted.

"For blondes?" the little man asked almost breathlessly.

"Yes."

The little man shook his head solemnly from side to side, seemed about to launch into a long discourse on the subject, then hunched his shoulders defensively.

"My goodness, that's a lot of money," he murmured, and turned away. Willowby watched while he shook his head again and lapsed into silence.

Bernice smiled across the table and touched her head meaningly. Then she winked.

"Now, Willowby, about this business Mr. Fox has dreamed up. How can we get out of it?"

Willowby squared his shoulders.

"To begin with," he said, "you're not mixed up in it and I'm not going to have you lose your job on my account. In the second place, I can get out of it by handing in my resignation tomorrow morning."

Bernice gasped.

"But—surely it's not that bad?"

Willowby shrugged.

"You work for Mr. Fox. You know him as well as I do."

"But surely he wouldn't fire you?"

"Mr. Fox would fire his grandmother if the quality of her cooking fell off for more than twenty-four hours."

THEY left the restaurant together at eight. Willowby noticed, as they left, that the little man who had spoken to him paid his bill and followed. A cloud of misunderstanding hung between himself and Bernice. She expected him to face Mr. Fox, and admit that he couldn't find the blondes. Willowby would rather have faced a cyclone.

It was a short trip across town, but two bus transfers were involved. As they left the last bus and walked up the quiet block to Bernice Adams' house, the little man who had broken the glass was still behind them.

Bernice didn't notice him, but Willowby had turned twice, catching the stranger's shadow across the walk.

Their goodnight was extended, although not very tender. Willowby knew that chasing blondes around all night did not appeal to Bernice. He hated to quarrel with her, but his job had been clearly mapped out for him.

"But—it's so useless," Bernice insisted. Her face had become quite red. "You just can't realize *how* useless it is."

Willowby shook his head stubbornly.

"I know Fox wants a thousand blondes," he said. "If he wanted a thousand elephants, he'd still insist on getting them. I better say good-night."

Bernice stamped her foot impatiently.

"You just want me to go in so you can go chasing pretty girls," she insisted. "Well, I will, and I just hope you're up all night looking for those

nasty, washed-out creatures."

It wasn't a very satisfactory parting, but Willowby had no other choice. He waited until she had stamped angrily into the house, turned away and saw that the little man was still following. He had stepped behind a tree half-way down the block.

Willowby's feet carried him automatically toward the bus. He boarded it and slumped wearily into a rear seat. His follower rushed from the shadows near the curb and entered behind Willowby. The man knew he was spotted now. He came toward Willowby hesitantly, sat down, and stared straight ahead.

The bus moved forward. The old gentleman turned slightly, as though trying to gain courage for conversation.

"You probably think I'm an awful pest?"

Willowby was surprised at the mildness in his voice.

"Oh, I don't know," he admitted. "I guess you're lonely, or something."

The little gentleman shuddered.

"Oh, yes, I do get lonely. This time it's something more important though. I heard you say you had to have a lot of blonde young ladies."

Willowby nodded.

"Well," the old gent went on hurriedly, "by actual count there are only six hundred blondes in this city at present, and not many of them are very nice looking."

Willowby Jones shot a startled glance at his new-found friend.

"Now, don't misunderstand me," the other begged, his face turning red. "You see, I made it my business to find out. I had to."

WILLOWBY liked his companion. Now that they had met, he was impressed by the sincere friendliness

of the old gentleman.

"Maybe you could tell that to my boss," he said suddenly. "Say, my name's Willowby Jones. Maybe we ought to know each other."

The little man looked hesitant.

"You weren't fooling when you said there was a million dollars in this deal, were you?"

Willowby hesitated.

"I guess it would be worth quite a lot if we could round up all those blondes for Mr. Fox. No, not a million dollars, but it least a nice bonus."

"Maybe you could share some of it, if I did all the work?"

Willowby would gladly have turned the whole task over to more capable hands.

"I'll give you half of everything I make if you can help me out. You just said there weren't that many blondes in the city."

The little man thought for a moment, then offered his hand.

"All right," he said. "My name is Philbert U. Quinby. The U is for Useless, but I dropped it as a young man. Mr. Jones, I'll *make* those blondes for you."

Willowby recoiled, horrified.

"That is," Philbert U. Quinby went on hurriedly, "I have a hair-ray that, when focused on any hair, turns it to a lustrous blonde color."

Willowby felt his eyes bulge out so far that he considered the idea of pushing them back in with his finger tips.

"That's—that's never been done," he protested.

Quinby shook his head.

"They said that when Columbus wanted to cross the Atlantic, didn't they?"

"But why haven't you used the machine before?" Willowby asked. "Surely it would make a fortune for you."

Philbert U. Quinby blushed.

"I'm frightened of young ladies," he confessed. "I keep trying to get enough courage to try it out. Every time I approach a young woman I find myself blushing terribly. It just doesn't work. Please, would you help me out? I'm sure we'd make a great success."

Willowby Jones was on the spot. Bernice was already angry. Mr. Fox would have him hanged on the nearest lamp post if those blondes didn't show up sometime tomorrow, and now Philbert U. Quinby was putting the issue squarely up to Willowby. What if the hair-ray didn't work. He'd make a triple fool of himself.

There was no choice.

"You really think this hair-ray will work?" Willowby asked.

Quinby leaned close to his ear.

"I tried it on a big black rat," he whispered. "That rat is the prettiest blonde in the world right now."

"Rats aren't women," Willowby thought with a smile, "but some women are rats."

"We'll try," he said aloud. "Where's the machine?"

Quinby was radiant.

"I'll have it for you in a jiffy," he promised. "We'll drop off the bus in the Loop. I have a modest room close to the river. We'll go there."

BERNICE ADAMS opened the front door a crack, saw Willowby on the porch and pushed the door wide. She was clad in a blue robe, with pajama legs and small slippers visible below it. Her eyes widened as she recognized the little man they had seen at the restaurant.

"Willowby!" Bernice was frightened and angry at the same time. "It's after two in the morning. What are you doing here?"

"We're looking for a rat!" Willowby

blushed. "That is, I mean we're looking for someone who will try the hair-ray machine."

Quinby, still in the background, was moving restlessly from one foot to the other. His face was a violent red. He wanted to run away. Under his left arm he carried a small, square, black box.

"Willowby Jones!" Bernice had stepped outside, closing the door quietly behind her. "You're drunk!"

Willowby shook his head quickly.

"Sober," he insisted. "Stone sober. It's like this . . ."

He launched into a full explanation of his meeting with Mr. Quinby and the result of their conversation.

"Now," he finished, "I wonder if you'll let us use the ray on you. That rat was the prettiest blonde I've ever seen. It's sure to work."

His eagerness and wish to do the job right touched Bernice. There was a powerful sales talk in what he had to offer.

"But how do I know it won't ruin my hair," she protested. "It doesn't sound possible."

"It worked on the rat," Quinby offered quickly.

"Sure it did," Willowby backed him up. "Of course, you're not a rat, but I'm sure . . ."

"Thanks," Bernice said a little grimly. "Willowby, this really means a lot to you, doesn't it?"

Willowby gulped.

"A job," he said. "And I guess it's just the idea of not being able to handle this thing right. Mr. Fox gave me the responsibility and I'd like to prove . . ."

Bernice nodded. Her eyes blurred a little.

"You're sweet," she said, and kissed him. Philbert Quinby backed away a few steps, as though afraid she might

try to do the same to him. "Get out you're old machine. I'm ready."

Quinby passed the box to Willowby with an eagerness that indicated how long he had waited for this opportunity. Willowby opened the box and drew out an elongated tube with a small, round casing on one end. Attached to this box was an electrical cord.

"We need an electric outlet," he said. "Maybe in the living room?"

Bernice seemed doubtful.

"If we wake Dad up . . ."

Willowby shuddered.

"We'll be very quiet," he said.

They entered the darkened house. Bernice found a lamp in the corner and turned it on. Mr. Quinby remained a safe distance from her as Willowby plugged in the cord. Inside the hair-ray a little motor started to hum.

"Just hold it over her head so the light touches her hair," Quinby offered.

A wide beam of light shot from the tube of the machine. Bernice sat down.

"Is that all there is to it?" Willowby asked.

Quinby nodded and started to make queer, mouse-like sounds in his throat. He looked frightened.

"Get it over with," Bernice whispered.

Willowby clutched the tube lightly, aimed the ray at Bernice's hair and closed his eyes.

"My goodness, it's hot," Bernice said. "Hurry, Willowby."

FROM his corner by the door, Mr. Quinby gasped. Willowby opened his eyes. Bernice had seated herself on a heavy mohair chair. Her hair had suddenly turned a rich, golden yellow. The chair had done the same. The chair had been blue with red trimming. Now both the chair and Bernice

were very blonde.

"It works!" Willowby's voice rose in a shout, then died abruptly as he remembered old man Adams snoring on the second floor. "It works."

Bernice sprang to her feet and ran to the mirror. A delighted gasp escaped her lips.

"Willowby, I'm beautiful." She returned and threw her arms about him. "I'm prettier than I ever was—say I am."

Willowby was so happy that he could say nothing. Words formed in his throat and caught there. He kissed her, then she released herself and rushed to Philbert U. Quinby.

"You're the most wonderful little man in the world." She planted a big kiss on his cheek. "You're more famous than—than Edison."

Mr. Quinby's blood pressure sent brilliant red to the top of his smooth head.

"My goodness," Mr. Quinby said weakly. "I've never been kissed before. I do think you're even more pretty than my blonde rat. I—I like being kissed."

He looked hopeful.

"And now," Bernice said. "You've got to get out of here right away. Dad will be hard enough to handle in the morning. I don't want him to know you had anything to do with this."

"You've got a blonde chair now," Willowby said. "Do you think I ought to buy a new one?"

Bernice smiled.

"I think if you've got a part interest in this machine, you can buy a houseful pretty soon."

Willowby's eyes widened. He hadn't thought of that.

IT WASN'T too late to place an ad in the *Daily Record*. Willowby

took care of the ad, made arrangements early the following morning with Mr. Fox to reserve a large room at the Hotel Harold, and waited for girls to show up. The ad read:

We offer, absolutely free of charge, an opportunity for you to become the owner of a ravishing head of pure, golden-blond hair. The process, not a dye, is brand new. After today, the process will cost at least fifty dollars. For advertising purposes, the chance will be given to the first thousand girls free of charge.

Only those under thirty and attractive will be considered.

Only those under thirty and attractive will be considered. By nine o'clock, the Hotel Harold was overflowing with women. Willowby had never seen so many lovely girls at once in his life. He hoped that Bernice, who had already caused a riot at the office, would not come to the Hotel Harold.

Jealousy was a horrible thing and he thanked his lucky stars that he had evaded her wrath so neatly the night before.

At first, Willowby's free customers were a bit reluctant to chance the change from dark to light. Philbert Quinby, however, used the hair-ray swiftly and with an expert touch. With the first three dozen applicants turned away satisfied, both men had more work than they wanted.

As each girl left, Willowby passed her a card with the name *Fox and Laird* printed across it. The card carried this message:

Not only is the process free of charge, but you will be paid ten dollars if this advertising firm is allowed to photograph you.

AT NOON it was over. Philbert U. Quinby, very much at home with his new task, had actually learned to love being close to women. He put the machine away reluctantly, after he

had made blondes of at least a dozen women over the set quota.

"Girls are pretty nice, aren't they?" he said mildly, after the hotel personnel had locked the door and formed lines to prevent further raids on the room. "I think I'll just make a few blondes every day for the fun of it. There seems to be no end to their gratitude."

Willowby didn't argue the point. He had accomplished his purpose. Mr. Fox had his photographs, and he had publicity. He knew that Quinby had a fortune in the hair-ray machine, but he felt that Quinby owed him no part of it. In fact, Willowby Jones owed Quinby for the success that might have been a disaster.

They ate lunch together, were located at once by members of the press, and Willowby modestly gave Fox and Laird another thousand bucks' worth of publicity. Mr. Quinby was mobbed as he left the restaurant and had to sign autographs for half an hour while Willowby waited.

It ended at the restaurant. Mr. Quinby promised to meet him the following day and Willowby Jones went home for a complete rest. Willowby was happy as he entered the lobby of the Acorn Arms Apartment Hotel. His happiness dissolved into horror soon after. The wart who adorned the desk on the lobby croaked at him as he passed.

"A Miss Adams has been trying to reach you by phone for the past hour. She sounds plenty mad."

Willowby frowned. Could Bernice be jealous of his morning's activity? He found the booth, dialed the office and waited.

"I'd like to speak to Miss Bernice Adams."

Sour Puss, on the office switchboard, recognized him, moaned something about people who didn't work for a

living, and plugged his line through to Bernice's desk.

"Willowby?" Bernice's voice was filled with terror.

Willowby caught his breath.

"Yes?"

A sob came to him over the wire.

"Willowby, you've got to get out of town right away."

"Out of town?" Willowby gasped.

"But . . ."

"It's that hair machine," Bernice sobbed. "I'm wearing my hat this minute, or the secret would be out. This morning before I left for work, all the hair on that overstuffed chair fell out. Now it's coming out of my head. Willowby, all those girls, a thousand of them, will be bald by tomorrow. Do you realize what that means?"

Willowby gulped. Then Quinby's machine hadn't worked, after all. The rat was tough. It could take it. Now a chair and a thousand blondes had already, or were going to lose every hair they had.

"My goodness," he said. "Bernice, you—you'll never forgive . . ."

Her voice grew lower.

"There are three girls in Mr. Fox's office this minute," she said. "Never mind how I feel about it. I can't see you torn apart by all those women and then tossed in jail. I don't know if they've found out yet, but all three of the girls with Mr. Fox are wearing their hats."

Willowby wanted to run. He wanted to run as fast as he could until he reached some strange, safe place like Africa. He thought of poor little Philbert (U for Useless) Quinby and knew he'd been named to fit.

"I'll get a ticket to Toledo," he said breathlessly. "I'll write. Let me know what happens."

A hunted man. A man for whom the electric chair would be a safe place

compared to the wrath he would face here.

"But hurry," Bernice went on. "Mr. Fox just came out. He looks terribly angry. You'd better buy a ticket to California."

Willowby grunted.

"Or Berlin," he corrected. "It's safer there."

HE LOCATED Philbert Quinby quite easily. Mr. Quinby was loafing in his room. He was enjoying a copy of *Girls—A Magazine for Bachelors*.

Willowby almost knocked the door down in his eagerness to get in. He heard Mr. Quinby's voice from behind the door and his slippers on the floor.

"Just a moment, for heaven's sake," Mr. Quinby was protesting. "Can't a man get a little relaxation?"

Willowby broke in upon him eagerly, two tickets in his hand.

"Get your stuff packed in a hurry. We're going to California."

"But I like it here," Quinby protested. "Besides—the hair-ray . . ."

"That's it!" Willowby backed to the door, making sure it was locked behind him. "The hair-ray didn't work—that is, not the way we expected. How would you like to face the wrath of a thousand bald-headed women?"

Philbert Quinby started to turn a pastel shade of green. He tried to speak but his lips only slapped together silently. Finally, with gestures, he managed to convey the idea of absolute and complete fright. He regained use of his vocal organs.

"Bald . . .?"

He mouthed the word slowly.

Willowby nodded.

"Bald," he agreed. "A thousand lovely young girls with scalps as smooth as marbles."

Quinby started to shake.

"I think," he said falteringly. "That the trip would be good for both of us. We need a rest."

He started tossing his clothing into a bag.

PHILBERT QUINBY tossed the paper to one side and stared out the car window at the telephone poles that flashed by in smooth precision. They had been on the Fruit State Limited for the better part of eight hours. Six hundred miles separated them both from the horror they had so recently faced. The copy of the *Daily Record*, which Quinby had just finished reading, told the story with pictures. The pictures were the before and after type.

The story was quite clear and not at all reassuring:

The city was thrown into an uproar today when over a thousand young ladies suddenly found themselves losing every hair on their pretty heads. Investigation by this paper brought to light the following facts:

Two men, posing as beauty experts, advertised for, and found, a number of girls willing to have their hair changed to a "lustrous, golden blonde." The culprits, now the object of a careful search by the police, turned hair blonde as advertised, but their talents went further than that.

Today, every girl who answered the ad has lost every last hair in her head. The *Daily Record* warns these two men that the wholesale destruction of such beauty is a crime unpardonable by the victims and public as well. They will be searched out and punished in a manner to fit the crime.

The names of both men are not known. One of them, Willowby R. Jones, worked for the Fox and Laird Advertising Agency. However, Mr. Fox, president of this company, has professed no knowledge of the matter. He refuses to accept liability, as he tells the press Jones is no longer in his employ and that Fox and Laird knew nothing of the wild scheme.

It will be only a matter of hours before these criminals will be brought to justice for their crime against society.

Willowby had a headache. It was worse than anything the willies had ever given him. He felt punch-drunk from lack of sleep and he wondered what Bernice would look like without

that lovely growth of blue-black hair.

"It looks as though we'd better give up," Mr. Quinby said at last. "By nature I'm a mild man. Perhaps if I were to tell them about the rat. He didn't lose *his* hair. Maybe everything will be all right."

"Damn that rat," Willowby said savagely. "Because of a blonde rat, we're facing something that we'll never get out of. All the time, you know what I keep thinking?"

Quinby didn't know and Willowby chuckled. It was a low, dry chuckle that expressed no humor.

"What's old man Adams going to do with that mohair chair. It must look a little worn without any hair on it. At least I've got even with him for those nights he wound the clock in the front hall until I took the hint and went home."

Quinby looked a little shocked.

"Do you think this is the time for humor," he asked. "We are in a—hell of a spot."

Willowby considered that.

"You haven't had much to do with women before this episode, have you, Mr. Quinby?"

Quinby shook his head.

"When you speak of hell, you're speaking of a mild, pleasant climate, compared with what's waiting for us back home. No, Mr. Quinby, we'd better not go back. I've been thinking of something. Have you ever heard of the Foreign Legion?"

Mr. Quinby turned a shade paler.

"No!" he croaked. "Not that! We'll have to think of something else."

PHILBERT U. QUINBY was gone.

Willowby had no doubt of Mr. Quinby's absence. The note had been pinned to Willowby's pillow.

"Dear Mr. Jones," it read. "I don't

think it would be wise of us to join the Foreign Legion, or anything so drastic. I feel, in a great measure, responsible for all this. I am returning to the city at once and will advise you if there is any way I can clear your name. Meanwhile, contact me at my home address.

*Sincerely yours,
Philbert Useless Quinby.*

Willowby read the note three times before he wadded it up carefully and slipped it into the bottom of his suitcase. He dressed carefully and went to the dining-car for breakfast. There were no morning papers in the car so he knew nothing more about his predicament than he had last night.

Willowby ate slowly, with no appetite for food. Quinby had been a good sport. Why hadn't they both returned long ago and faced the music? More and more, as Willowby thought about the little man facing the city alone, was he in favor of following Mr. Quinby with all possible speed.

If they sued, he remembered that you can't milk a rubber glove, so what would it cost him?

He had no money to begin with and no job. It would all cool down in a few more weeks and the girls could buy wigs. At least, he thought wryly, the wig business would flourish.

How would Bernice look in a wig? Willowby shuddered. She had seen him through a tough spot. He would not let her down now. In later years maybe he'd become a hero. He could hear them saying:

"There goes Willowby Jones. His wife's hair isn't real, but Jones is a loyal soul. He's standing by her through thick and thin."

Willowby worked himself into such a fever of loyalty that he failed to notice that for the past several minutes the train had been stopped at a small

station called Stumpville, and the conductor was outside, arguing with three men.

He turned toward the window to get a better view. Good lord, it was his boss, Mr. Fox! No wonder he hadn't noticed the town. The train wasn't scheduled to stop here. Evidently Fox and the men who were with him had found out from Mr. Quinby where Willowby was headed for. They were after him.

Willowby arose quickly and headed for his compartment. Half way to the end of the car he stopped short. Fox was just entering the diner.

Willowby's boss looked extremely unpleasant right now. He shouted and waved a hand as Willowby turned to run.

"Jones, for heaven's sake, man, are you crazy?"

Willowby stopped, turned slowly and waited for Fox to come abreast of him.

"No, sir," he said as respectfully as possible. "I just had an idea I wouldn't be going back so soon. I really haven't had any vacation yet."

Fox frowned and grasped Willowby's arm.

"The honeymoon is over, Jones," he said. "You're going back to face the music."

Willowby cleared his throat miserably.

"Yes, sir," he said. "I guess that's the best way."

THE offices of Fox and Laird were buzzing with excitement. Willowby knew little more when he arrived, than he had on the train. He did know that Fox, and the two men who were officers of Barbarous Blonde Hair Dye Inc. had taken a plane half way across the country to find him. He wasn't sure just what the punishment was to be, but whatever happened, he would face

it for Bernice's sake.

Wedge between Fox, Mr. Seltz and Mr. Walters of Barbarous Blonde, Willowby went through the opened glass doors, across the office and into Mr. Fox's private room. Here he was due for several violent surprises.

Bernice was waiting for him. She had a queer, short growth of yellow fuzz on her head as though her hair had recently been clipped. She rushed forward, threw her arms about Willowby and smothered him with kisses.

"I'm so glad, so darn glad!" She was crying. "I was afraid you'd do something awful before they found you."

"You—told them?"

Bernice only hugged him tighter.

"I told them what train you were on. Mr. Quinby came to me when he returned. He wanted to come here, but Mr. Fox insisted on handling it personally."

"But—but I don't understand." Willowby protested.

Mr. Fox, as he usually did under such conditions, took the floor with a broad smile. He was rubbing his palms together in a satisfied manner.

"You will, Jones," he insisted. "You will. The young ladies lost their hair, but within twenty-four hours it started to grow in all over again. This time even the roots are blonde. Experts agree that within three weeks every woman who stood under that machine will have the softest, finest natural blonde hair ever conceived."

Willowby's heart suddenly bounced from under the heavy load it had been carrying and started to pound with relief.

"Quinby?" he managed to mutter. "He's safe. He didn't kill himself, or anything?"

Mr. Fox would not be rushed.

"Philbert U. Quinby will be discussed

in due time," he said. "But, first, the railroad ticket agency has wired you a vote of thanks. They've just sold over a thousand round-trip vacation tickets to various resorts. It seems that these young women want to get out of town until their hair grows in. There has been a fine bonus mentioned that they feel you deserve."

"Isn't that lovely, dear," Bernice asked. "Dad won't be angry if you use part of the money to buy a new chair."

Willowby sighed.

"Wait until Quinby hears of this," he said. "It's—it's beyond . . ."

"Did someone mention my name?"

THE voice, very low and modest, came from the doorway behind Willowby. He whirled around to find Philbert U. Quinby who had just come in. Quinby was done up beautifully in a gray business suit, a huge black cigar and a smile of prosperity.

A round of applause went up. Mr. Seltz and Mr. Walters stepped to Quinby's side, as though to bathe in the light of his greatness. Mr. Fox's chest bulged under his vest.

"Jones, I'd like you to meet Phil U. Quinby, President of Barbarous Blonde Hair Treatment, Inc. Mr. Quinby has offered us a magnificent advertising contract for the coming five years."

Willowby's jaw dropped.

"Philbert—" he managed. "Philbert! Well, I'm damned!"

Philbert Quinby took his hand, shook it, and stepped closer to Willowby.

"When they found out I was the one who had the machine they kicked out their president and hired me. Starting out at sixty thousand a year and royalties on every machine. Not bad, huh?"

"But—how . . .?"

"I went to Miss Adams when I came back. Her hair was already growing

again. I saw big possibilities." He hesitated, then grinned. "And, Willowby, don't let Fox kid you. He's hiring you back because I insisted that you get ten thousand a year for handling my company's business. Will that be agreeable with you?"

"Philbert," Willowby was overcome. "You're—you're a . . ."

"Forget it, Mr. Jones." Quinby raised his voice so that all might hear. "We'll go a long way, you and I. You've probably wondered what the U. stands for in my middle name?"

Eyebrows were raised expectantly and Willowby remembered Philbert Useless Quinby.

Quinby didn't hesitate.

"Philbert Unusual Quinby is the full name," he said quietly. "I'm a little modest about using that middle name."

Gestures and murmurs of approval,

and Quinby bent close to Willowby again.

"Remember that blonde rat that got us started?"

Willowby nodded.

"That rat's got a gold cage on my desk," Quinby said solemnly. "When it dies, we'll erect a fifty-foot monument to it at the corporation's gate. And an inscription: *Philbert U. Quinby—from rats to riches.*"

"Or, You Can't Go Wrong With Barbarous Blonde," Willowby added appreciatively.

Quinby swelled with importance.

"Get started on that, Fox," he said. "Mr. Jones has a fine slogan there. See that he gets full cooperation."

Mr. Fox seemed to deflate.

"Yes, sir," he said humbly. "Right away, sir."

"Cooperation," Willowby said. "It is a wonderful thing."

FANTASTIC—BUT TRUE

By ALEX WAMAN

Facts such as these prove that fantasy is not confined only to fiction!

THE CROWBAR CASE

HOW would you respond to a crowbar driven through your head? Would you live? Would your actions be radically changed if you did live? Well, don't try it, for experimental evidence is already at hand to answer these questions.

In 1848, a laborer lost a large part of the frontal areas of his brain when a crowbar was driven through his head in a blasting accident. According to accounts, this man showed little change in his intellectual responses after recovery. His temper, however, became more violent and his emotional control was diminished.

Modern investigators, however, have not fully accepted these conclusions of the "crowbar" case. This type of evidence, they say, is not always convincing. For after the first World War, there were many cases in which patients lost relatively

large amounts of brain tissue and were reported to have recovered completely. "Complete recovery," however, seems often to have meant the ability to walk across the room or to answer a few simple questions. To the casual observer, then, judgments of "normal" behavior are often unsound.

Latest reports from scientists bring forth the view that any brain injury will affect behavior in some way.

Pull out the crowbar from your head and see!

GOONEY

ONE of the most interesting of birds is the gooney bird. It is a rather large bird, being the approximate size of a goose. This bird has a pair of white, shiny wings which appear to be large, but are actually much too small for its great size. These birds were found on several small

islands of the Pacific Ocean and were quite interesting to watch and see.

When they wanted to fly, they had to compensate in some manner for their lack of sufficient wing expansion and area. Our great transport and bomber planes as well as any heavier-than-air machine must also compensate for this and the gooney bird does so in exactly the same manner.

It waddles around until it can find a suitable large open field. It then starts down the field at a brisk walk, going faster and faster until it is actually running. It continues moving more rapidly, gaining momentum, until it has sufficient speed for flying purposes. It then leaves the ground, beating its wings with all its might and main and soars none too gracefully away.

Needless to say, it is quite astonishing to watch the young attempt to fly. Their efforts many times are not sufficient and they fail to rise as do their parents. Awkward to begin with, they look supremely ridiculous falling all over their feet, crashing into bushes and trees or falling into ponds with loud shrieks.

Even the adults make mistakes sometimes and the results are quite frightful. They cannot stop, and so they bump into anything interposed in their paths. This is often their undoing.

Gooney birds are noted for their dances. The dance is a premarital device for getting the birds of both sexes together. The entire dance is conducted in a circle somewhat in the manner of the Big Apple or the La Conga. There is much beating of wings, and their gyrations are fearful to behold. Partners enter the center of the ring and mating takes place from here on. The entire ceremony sounds like a cannibal tribe which is preparing to eat a timely human morsel and the noise is terrific. On the whole, the gooney bird is not pretty, but its actions are really very interesting, at the very least.

POWERS OF THE SUN

RECENT studies have disclosed many interesting phenomena concerning the sun. One of these is its huge magnetic power and how it is related to actions on the earth. One investigator has said that the sun is an immense spherical magnet similar to the earth, but, of course, much larger.

The force of its magnetic field is about 100 times as great as the earth's. However, despite this greater magnitude in magnetic power, the sun does not directly affect the earth; this is due to the great distance separating the two planets. The magnetic storms which occasionally occur about the earth are the result of streams of electrical particles coming through space. These in turn are affected by the magnitude of the solar magnetism.

For those who are unacquainted with magnetic storms, it should be noted that they are comparatively local conditions and go about their

business unforeseen by the naked eye. They make themselves known, however, through their disastrous effects on wired and wireless communications. Also, the Auroras are a result of magnetic storms, but these are of a rather remote nature. In fact, the distance up of the lowest polar light that has been measured is over fifty miles. The common weather cloud, on the other hand, ranges just about a few miles in altitude.

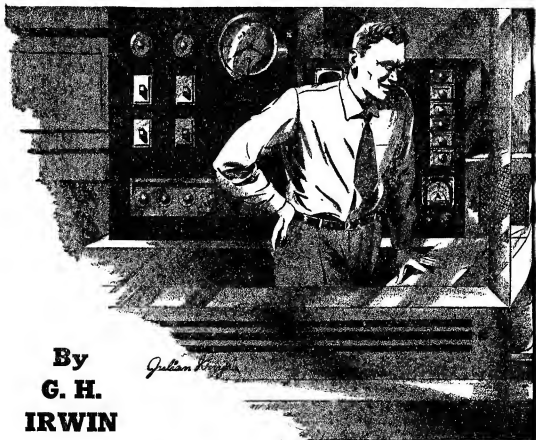
A VITAL MATERIAL—GLASS

THE drastic reduction of available materials, imposed upon industry by the present war, has caused much research and development in the way of substitutions. One of the most important of these is the use of glass in an infinite number of places in modern production, where ten years ago no one would have dreamed it could be used. This versatile material is being put into more and more jobs as the war continues. For example, modern furniture manufacturers, who are unable to procure such metals as chromium, are now producing all-glass furniture. The manufacturers of radiator caps, flower boxes, and so forth are turning to glass. Moreover, glass bearings are now being made which replace the rare jewel bearings in precision instruments on such things as time bombs and submarines. Although the use of glass in some instances will cease when the channels of world trade are free once again, many of the new uses will remain as a permanent part of the scientific production process.

Unlike rubber, the ingredients in glass are produced abundantly in this country. They are: soda ash, limestone, and silica sand. Furthermore the production of these latter materials has been accelerated and there is no indication that it will be forced to slow down. But the ready supply of glass is not its only advantageous characteristic: its peculiar properties render it to extensive treatment while in the productive process. For example, many people thought that the use of glass would necessarily be restricted due to its inability to stand up under terrific heat and pressures. This obstacle, however, has been jumped by tempering glass. After the glass has gone through this process, its strength is increased five or six times. Tempering is a process whereby the glass is rapidly heated and then suddenly cooled. The tempered glass can withstand temperatures up to 500 degrees Fahrenheit. The tempering of glass is one of the most significant achievements of recent years.

It is also interesting to note how glass is utilized by the armed services. For example, the scientific war of today is dependent upon field glasses, bomb sights, aerial camera lenses, gun sights, and so forth, and glass is the basic ingredient in all these products. Furthermore, glass is used all the way from windshields for jeeps up to the huge modern searchlights. Yes, glass is really doing its share in the vast drive for victory.

YOU CAN SAY



By
**G. H.
IRWIN**

**Reese went all out for Truth.
Then the trouble really started!**

BILL REESE, a little uncomfortable in the small booth, leaned forward toward the table mike and pressed down the contact button. A small red light flashed on the panel at his elbow.

He nodded toward Robert Langly, sound man for WZZB, who was comfortably stretched across a leather

chair in the control room. Langly reached over and snapped on the receiver.

Reese started to read in a low, informative voice.

"Good evening! This is Bill Reese speaking to you for Mellow's Fine Whiskey. Mr. Mellow has a confidential message for all of his radio listen-

THAT AGAIN



Neither Reese nor Langly saw the shadowy figure tampering with the water cooler

ers. This is a time for every man to remain alert and on the job. Mellow's liquors have been carefully aged under the finest conditions. No harshness. No headaches the morning after."

Reese stopped abruptly, tossed the looseleaf away from him and stood up.

"Damn!" he shouted. "Bob, I'm fed up on the lousy commercials. So help me, Mellow doesn't make a drink that's any better than the next guy's. As for the hangover, I'm still groggy from that free stuff he peddled to us last night."

Langly, still motionless in the outer studio, grinned at him through the glass panel.

"So we've got the first real sponsor WZZB has seen in a year. There's a trial show on for tonight. Are you going to land the contract or shall we just fold up the sound equipment and quietly steal away?"

Reese, tall, and topped with a thick mop of red hair, sat down again. He reached for the carefully prepared commercial, put it before him and started to read again.

"Mellow's Whiskey is *better*. Made especially for men who appreciate the finest . . ."

He stopped, snapped off the light and went out to the control room.

"Guess I'm getting sour." He walked across the room, switched off the speaker and leaned on the recording machine. "Honest to Pete, if it isn't Celia's Chocolates, *so* good they'll melt in your fingers, it's Mellow and his damned rotgut that will kill a man if he soaks up more than a gallon of it."

Langly arose meekly, brushed his hair into a semblance of straightness and went to the watercooler. He filled a paper cup as he talked over his shoulder.

"Reese, you're not meant for this small time stuff. I'm only a half-cracked technician and WZZB is about my style. Ever since the boss hired you, I've thought you ought to have your own show. You got a lot of ideas—good ones. Why don't you break loose?"

Reese chuckled.

"Make a second Walter Winchell of myself?" he said. "Yeah! I know. I've got a file of stuff that would break this town wide open. I've saved up enough dirt to cover every office in the city. So what? Shelton is a weak-kneed sissy. He can't stand having WZZB made a hot spot. He'd rather go broke and fold up than give his listeners something to think about."

Langly finished drinking, turned and stared at his friend.

"There are other outfits."

"Sure, I know." Reese went to the cooler. "There's one other station in town. WZRX gets the network shows and leaves the local stuff for us. Well, Bob, I'm local stuff myself. WZRX doesn't want any part of me. I've been tamed for so long that there isn't any originality left in me. I'll be reading

the comics to the kids pretty soon, and I'll be in just the spot where I belong."

He tossed the paper cup into the basket, opened a fresh pack of cigarettes and lighted one.

ACROSS the hall, Howard Shelton's voice rose to a high pitch from an office marked *Private*.

Shelton was having his weekly argument with the Celia's Chocolates account. Chocolates were selling faster than the factory could make them, but Shelton's accounts were never satisfied. WZZB had a reputation for being small-time and Shelton's customers knew it. There was always that little matter of cutting the cost of broadcasts. The station was fighting a losing battle.

"Nuts!" Reese tossed the cigarette on the floor and ground it with his heel. "I'm going out for coffee. Got that special mike set up in B for the great James Mellow to speak over?"

Langly grinned.

"Studio B is ready for the show," he said. "I'd like to give Mellow a hot-foot when he goes on the air. That's the only way we'll put any pep into the show."

Reese went out. Langly didn't look up. After a while he pushed a wax disc on the turntable and plugged in the speaker. The strains of *St. Louis Woman* filled the room. Langly, staring sadly out the window, shook his head.

"Bill Reese," he said slowly to himself. "One of the best announcers on the air chained to a jerk outfit like this."

WZZB hummed sadly with half-hearted activity. Studio B, a square, twenty-foot box hung with heavy curtains, held a fair audience. James Mellow, fat, fifty, and sporting

a gray suit and beard of like color, sat on the stage. His daughter, Sharon, a bit of fluff, low-cut gown and sweet smile, was beside him. The officers of Mellow's Fine Whiskey, Inc., were ranged carefully in the front row and the studio band waited to open the show.

In the sound booth above the stage, Robert Langly hung listlessly over the controls, receiver adjusted to his ears. Canned music for Celia's Chocolates came in clearly from Studio A. He heard Shelton switch off the last record and read the commercials. Help was hard to get. Shelton made sure that Bill Reese was fresh for the Mellow job.

Langly leaned forward, nodded toward Reese who was standing alone on the side of the stage. He saw Reese lean over the watercooler, fill a glass with water and smack his lips as he drank. Reese took another long gulp, put the cup down silently and walked to the mike.

Langly held up a finger. The red light under the clock went on and the studio's lights dimmed. The orchestra was poised to strike.

The finger went down and Bill's voice came clearly over the receiver.

"Good evening! This is Bill Reese speaking for Mellow's Fine Whiskey . . ."

Why did it flatter people to hear their name on the air? Reese went on, a spark of life in his voice that surprised Langly. Maybe Bill would make the best of it, after all.

Langly found himself admiring Mellow's daughter. Sharon had a lot of character in that small face. Mellow himself leaned forward in his chair, fat paunch rolling over the edge of it.

"This is the time for every man to remain alert . . ."

"Swell," Langly thought. "A nice

job. Now, if the music is good, maybe we'll get out of the red after all."

But something had gone wrong.

He saw Mellow tense suddenly. The girl, Sharon, flushed an unpleasant red. Langly hadn't been listening. His ears were accustomed to sounds and not words. Bill Reese's face had darkened and his lips twitched strangely. Langly listened and horror whitened his face.

Reese was tearing hell out of that commercial.

"There's a war on." His voice was loud and inspired. "Any damned fool that would befuddle his wits with the rot-gut that Mellow sells, is committing sabotage."

Langly heard the rising sounds of protest from below. He knew he should cut Reese off the air but his fingers refused to touch the switch. Reese must know what he was doing. He'd worked out an idea of his own.

"Good for you, boy," Langly's lips moved soundlessly. "Give 'em hell."

Reese droned on.

"Mellow makes fire water that will take the lining out of a boiler. Any man who drinks more than a small glass will curl up his toes and nourish the daisies inside of a year. I assure you . . ."

The door opened quickly behind Langly. He turned to see Howard Shelton, the station owner, come in. Shelton's face was brick-red. His fists were clenched.

"Cut that fool off the air," Shelton shouted. "Cut him off before I smash the panel with my bare hands."

He ran across the sound room. Langly pushed out one foot, caught him neatly on the shin and sent him sprawling full length on the floor.

"And now, Mellow's lousy whiskey presents a half hour of music by the worst band this side of the Rockies,"

Reese was saying. "How anyone can stay tuned to this show after the first number, I don't know. Bill Reese, folks, signing off for all time. It was nice knowing you."

Shelton was on his feet again. With one savage lunge he knocked Langly from his chair and snapped the main switch. Langly, sitting cross-legged on the floor, heard James Mellow utter a shrill cry of anger.

"Nice going, Bill," Langly whispered. "Now we're both looking for a new job."

BILL REESE stared moodily along the bar, reached for the third glass of beer and tossed it down.

"Bob," he said a trifle unsteadily. "Bob, ol' man, I'm the one who got you into this mess. What are we gonna do about it?"

Langly, both elbows on the bar, head bent forward over his own glass, allowed a groan to escape his lips.

"I oughta take it out of your hide," he said. "But damned if Shelton didn't have it coming to him. That was the nicest one-man war I've ever seen. How you ever got the courage . . ."

Reese looked at him gravely.

"I didn't," he said. "I fully meant to give the best in me to land that account. Something inside me went haywire. I didn't have any control over myself. It was as though someone else was doing the talking."

Langly smiled sadly.

"The mistake we always make," he said, "is trying to figure out these things when we're drunk. My mind's not too steady either."

Reese swallowed his drink and climbed wearily off the stool.

"I'm telling the truth," he said. "Everything was all right until I got in front of that mike. Then suddenly I felt as though I had to tell the truth.

I meant to lie as usual and give the product a build-up. Something inside me went wrong. I said just what I thought and I couldn't change a word of it."

Langly shrugged.

"Okay, if that's your story. Anyhow, we might as well get out of town. There's nothing here for us now. WZRX must be laughing their fool heads off. We tossed old man Mellow and his millions right into their lap." Reese was suddenly solemn.

"Honest to God, Bob," he said. "I didn't want to hurt you. I don't understand why you didn't cut me off the air before I made a fool of us."

"Maybe I thought it was about time someone told Shelton off. I thought you had something up your sleeve and I figured it wouldn't do any harm to play along with you."

"It did," Reese said. "It put us both out in the cold."

Langly stared moodily ahead.

"You can say that again," he said.

SHARON MELLOW was angry. Her father had always been a fat, over-important fool but tonight he was worse than ever. Sharon, perhaps because her father had been ready to murder the announcer at WZZB, found herself strangely attracted to Bill Reese. There was a reason for that, also. To begin with, Reese, as she saw him before the mike, had been tall, good-looking and had a mind of his own. Sharon enjoyed the beating her father had taken. It was good for him, good for all of them to have their self-importance knocked out from under them once in a while.

Sharon did not like Curt Randon of Station WZRX. Randon was one of those slick-haired kids with a smooth tongue and eyes that were either narrow and averted or drinking her in with

an unwholesome stare.

The Shadow Grill was crowded. James Mellow was still in a sour mood and Curt Randon practically wagged with a friendliness that he hoped would end in a long-term contract for his WZRX.

Randon smiled at Sharon across the table.

"It was unfortunate that your father attempted the WZZB arrangement," he said. "Reese is a hot-headed fool. The station has no access to a network. I believe that my own outfit will be able to handle the show with the dignity it deserves."

Mellow grunted pleasantly, but Sharon's eyes narrowed ever so slightly.

"Perhaps Mr. Reese didn't do so badly after all," she said. "I've heard a number of your shows. They are all about the same. It might surprise you to know that we've had a hundred calls today commenting on Mr. Reese's remarks. The listeners thought it was a great joke. They are paying more attention to the product than they ever did after previous shows."

Randon brought out his flashiest smile.

"But surely, Miss Mellow," he protested. "Crackpots are always looking for this sort of thing. WZRX will offer a steady, well-balanced program. We've been in the business for . . ."

Sharon stood up.

"Dad," she said. "I'm tired of this whole thing. Frankly, I think you should give Mr. Reese another try. He wasn't a bad sort. After all, phone orders have come in by the dozen today. It can't *all* be a mistake."

Mellow looked angrily up at her.

"I think you're interested in Reese," he said. "So far as I'm concerned, Shelton, Reese and WZZB are out of the question. I'm signing a contract tomorrow with Randon for a three-year

network show. Good night, Sharon."

Sharon Mellow flashed a savage look at Randon, caught his open stare and turned away quickly.

"You're running the business, Dad," she said. "It's been losing money for six months. I guess you can keep on losing as easily as I can. Good night."

She walked swiftly toward the check room.

Curt Randon stared after her with admiration in his black eyes.

"You're daughter has spirit, Mr. Mellow," he said.

"A damned hot temper, you mean. For once she's not getting her way and it hurts like hell."

WITH no goal to speak of, Bill Reese hit most of the night spots before twelve. Langly, his ever-present shadow, followed him into the Shadow Grill soon after midnight. They weaved unsteadily across the room, found a booth and flopped. Langly leaned forward on the table. There was an unsteady sob in his voice.

"Ish an injustish," he moaned. "The more I think about it, the more injustish it ish."

Reese motioned for the waiter and ordered more drinks. They sat silently for a long time, drinking themselves into a deeper state of misery as the minutes rolled by.

Gradually Reese became aware of a familiar voice coming from the booth behind him. Not quite sure of himself, he squinted savagely, concentrating on that voice.

He shook his head suddenly in complete agreement with himself. It was Curt, all right. Curt Randon of WZRX and his friend Walter Phillips. Reese hated Randon and his goose-grease hair. He hated WZRX and right now, he hated himself.

He tried to ignore Randon's voice but

there was a note of triumph in it that he couldn't push aside.

"Fixed for all time," Randon's voice was low. "Mellow is ready to sign with us tomorrow. It's in the bag."

"Mellow," Bill Reese thought. "So they're gloating over our downfall. Their drinking to their damned, lousy victory."

He nodded slightly to Langly and Langly shook his head in understanding. They both were silent, waiting for Randon to go on.

"What I can't figure out—" It was Phillips' high-pitched voice. "—is the way Reese fell into it. The stuff worked like a charm."

Stuff worked like a charm?

Reese stiffened. What the devil were those two up to? Randon chuckled.

"Wish I could get more of it," he said "The druggist said the little guy only sold him a quart. I still got a pint left."

It didn't make sense. A pint of what? What little guy?

There was a sudden scraping of feet in the other booth. One of them had stood up.

"Truth serum!" Phillips was speaking in an awed tone. "You put it in the water cooler, Reese drinks it and talks himself out of a job. You're smart, Randon, plenty smart."

Truth serum?

The glass in Bill Reese's hand fell to the table. His face turned a dull red. He *had* been drinking from that cooler. He took a glass of water just before he went on the show. He hadn't wanted to wreck the Mellow account, but he had said a lot of things he didn't mean to.

Then this was the explanation!

Reese stood up quickly. His fists were clenched. Langly, all the alcohol in him suddenly turned to fighting blood, rose opposite him.

"Curt Randon has a couple of broken bones overdue," Reese said simply.

"Think you'd like some exercise?"

Langly nodded.

"Lead on, my boy," he said.

REese stepped out of the booth. The two WZRX men were just leaving. Reese confronted Randon and had the pleasure of seeing Randon's face turn an ugly white.

"Hello, Curt," Reese said. "Hear you got the Mellow account."

Langly sidled closer. Walter Phillips, his small face pinched and strained, stood behind Randon.

"Glad to see you, Reese." Randon's lips curled into an unpleasant grin. "Yes, Mr. Mellow saw the light. I understand you pulled a boner for his benefit."

Reese stepped close to him.

"You understand?" His fists clenched. "You were around the corner listening in on every word. You've been talking too much, Curt."

Randon realized, now, that his conversation had been overheard.

He tried to bluff.

"You're a hot-headed fool, Reese," he said. "I've offered you a job before and you had the bad nature to tell me where I could get off. Now you're all washed up. Don't blame me . . ."

He stopped suddenly, backing away. Reese's eyes narrowed. With slow, deliberate pleasure he aimed a right at Randon's straight nose and put his shoulder behind the blow. Fist and nose met with a dull crunching sound.

Randon tottered backward, caught his balance, and wiped his hand across the bleeding, slightly off-center target of Reese's blow.

"You—you dirty . . ."

His left swung out but Reese was under it, 'way under. Reese balanced himself on his toes, and came up from underneath with an uppercut. With a groan of pain, Randon went down. He

turned over on his stomach, tried to stand up, then sank back to the carpet. He'd had enough.

The headwaiter and a couple of bouncers were on their way. Langly had been busy. His collar was ripped away and his left eye was swelling slowly. Walter Phillips was flat on his back, head against the wall, a silly expression on his face. WZZB had triumphed.

Langly saw the headwaiter.

"Maybe we oughta move along before the riot squad comes," he said. "I'm not quite up to a mass battle, to-night."

Reese didn't hear him. His eyes were glued on a half-filled bottle that stuck from Randon's back pocket. An idea was forming rapidly in his mind. WZRX had to expect retaliation.

He leaned over and drew the bottle from Randon's pocket. He pushed it into his own and turned to the crew of huskies who had finally reached the scene.

Reese faced them, a slow grin forming on his lips.

"There's been bloodshed here," he said slowly. "I'm gonna go peacefully if I can, but if you guys insist I'm still good for a few rounds."

The headwaiter, a stout, cautious man, considered the situation carefully. His customers didn't pay to see a prize-fight. Reese was a big man and plenty handy with his fists. Aside from that, the waiter didn't particularly like Curt Randon. The big shot from WZRX wasn't so hot on tips.

"Get the hell out of here, you two," he said. "You oughta' know better than mess up my place."

Reese pocketed his fists.

"You're a wise man," he said solemnly. "If there are any broken bones, tell Randon to try and collect for the doctor's fees!"

SHARON Mellow cruised slowly along 56th Street in the low-slung coupe. She had tried to find Reese at WZZB but Shelton wasn't in a gay mood. She remembered his exact words and tried not to be shocked by them.

"What, those two ungrateful saps?" Howard Shelton had moaned. "They put me on the spot, lose my cash for me and take a run-out powder. I don't know where they went but, by the gods, they better not come back!"

After that, Sharon's search was a long one, leading to various unpleasant places. From bar to bar, guided by the memory of barkeepers who had watched Reese stagger in and out again, she finally reached the Shadow Grill. Here the trail was hot. So hot that she met Curt Randon, a bloody handkerchief held to his nose, just leaving the club. She learned from the headwaiter that Reese had taken a cab. The doorman remembered Reese.

"Heard him tell the cabby that he and his pal wanted to go over to WZRX," he said. "That's on 40th Street, I think."

Sharon murmured a polite thank you, and headed for WZRX. Had Reese signed up with the rival station? It didn't sound like it, not with Curt Randon suffering from the effects of his recent battle. Sharon liked Reese better all the time. Since she had taken a good look at the battered Randon, she almost loved Reese. The boy had something.

The car purred smoothly as she guided it toward the darkened building at the far end of 40th. WZRX was a big, square affair, with block glass windows and a neon sign announcing to the world that "This is WZRX—The Biggest Little Station On The Air."

Sharon drove into the parking-lane behind the building, turned off the ignition and climbed out. There was no

one in sight, but the side door was open slightly and a light burned on the second floor. Sharon was suddenly conscious of the flimsy, silvery gown and the small silver sandals that did little to protect her from the wind. She wondered what she would say when she found Reese. So far as she knew, he didn't even know her.

Wishing that she hadn't started after him in the first place, she realized it was too late to back out now.

She walked quickly across the concrete drive, pushed the door open and hesitated. The halls were deserted and filled with the echo of her own small pumps. She found the stairs, shrugged in that "Oh well, might as well" manner and went toward the second floor.

LANGLY was hunched over the controls. The studio was deserted. This was only the local studio of WZRX. Tonight the network shows were being pushed directly through the power station ten miles from town and the city studios were closed.

Langly found the switches he was looking for, then glanced at his watch. He turned to smile at Reese.

"They'll change shows in five minutes," he said. "We'll plug in then, cut off the network program and give you the air."

Reese was stone sober. Anger glinted in his eyes.

"Air," he said, "is going to be the name for it. I'm going to air everything I know about this town and the people in it. Langly, my boy, they gave me a shot of truth serum, didn't they?"

Langly nodded gravely.

"They did that."

Reese pulled the bottle from his pocket and put it on the table before him.

"Then I suppose this pint of amber fluid is what's left of the stuff?"

Langly shook his head again.

"I would say so," he admitted. "Although I still don't understand just what it is."

Reese chuckled.

"I do," he said. "If a little of it mixed in water will crack me as wide open as I was tonight, a pint ought to be enough to finish off our stay in this fair city in fine style. Brother, when I get started, don't be surprised at anything. I'll probably tell a lot of stuff I haven't even dared tell Grandma."

Langly began to look worried. He glanced at the studio clock. Three minutes to nine.

"Look, Bill," he said uncertainly. "You still think we ought to go through with this?"

Reese, sitting comfortably behind the small table, mike before him, scowled.

"We lost a job because of Randon," he said. "Now we're getting our revenge. When I get done talking over my best enemy's station there'll be a representative from every city office ready to sue WZRX for everything it's got. We're gonna' make Randon sweat as he made us sweat. Then we'll catch the first train out of town and keep going until we cool off. Are you still game?"

Langly turned quickly at a slight sound in the hall outside. He listened, waiting for it to come again, but all was silent.

"I'm game," he said. "Wind up, brother, here comes the ball!"

Nine o'clock.

He pulled a lever down quickly, pressed a small row of buttons and watched with satisfaction as the red lights started to glow above them. Under the clock, a warning light flashed, then glowed steadily.

REESE picked up the bottle and gulped the contents hurriedly. He

made a wry face, wiped his lips and put the bottle aside. Leaning close to the mike, he felt new confidence surge into his brain.

"This is Bill Reese speaking to you through the courtesy of himself, Almighty God and a knack for getting into places he's not wanted."

He stopped, wiped sweat from his face and continued.

"For some time this announcer has felt an ever-growing disgust for the stuff pawned off on you poor, unsuspecting saps, under the name of legitimate advertising. You are told to wash your hair with *Drainish* that will get rid of dandruff, grow a new wig for the old, and help Grandma get rid of her gallstones. You have been told that toothpaste can grow new teeth and land a husband for the poor girl who has lost hers—the teeth I mean. In short, you've been told that the ills of mankind can be cured by one short trip to the nearest soda fountain, drug store or grocery chain.

"Folks, this will hurt, but the whole thing is a vast lie. Barnum has nothing on us poor boobs who read commercials for a living. We sit chained to our table, reciting with feverish voices, the many wonders of the junk we sell."

He paused, moistened his lips and winked at Langly. Thus far there had been no interruption. All was well and Random was headed for—Oh, well!

"Only today I was approached, to go on the air for a whiskey account. I'm not holding up names this time. I'm not holding my punches. Mellow Whiskies stink. Mellow himself filled me up with his rotgut last evening and I haven't felt the same since. Last year Mellow gave His Honor the Mayor a case of his best stuff. There was a little private party down at the city hall that night."

Here Reese mentioned a few names and told a few stories about politicians he hated cordially.

"When the party broke up, the Mayor was so soused that he signed a lot of papers he's still sorry about. It was Mellow's Fine Whiskey that put through that lousy traction scheme we've been paying for ever since.

"I can't say the same about the history of our tooth paste accounts, because tooth paste cleanses. Random, of this station, handles a network show for the Free Foam Tooth Paste Company. Last week a woman committed suicide by eating a tube of the stuff. Her name was in the papers, in a love-nest item. Front page stuff made out that her lover was a strong, silent number with name unmentioned. Uncle Sam says he's not strong and silent at all. In fact, he's on his way to Washington now with a couple of G-men. He was the city's foremost gambler, Ed Waters. Waters has stopped being strong and silent. He's babbling his head off all because a tube of tooth paste ended a woman's career and started the G-men looking in his direction. Free Foam, guaranteed to take the enamel off a kettle, or your teeth."

Reese was going great guns now. One by one he tore down every advertiser and public official that he had the goods on. Tore them apart coolly and in a voice that, Langly said afterward, "held the ring of judgment in it."

FIFTEEN minutes—twenty. Then from uptown a police siren sounded faintly. Reese winked, and Langly stood up and started to stride up and down the studio.

Reese said: "There's no bitterness in what I've been telling you. I've been on the air for a good many years and the gripes piled up until I decided to get them all off my chest at once.

This city is swell. Most of the people in it are swell. Right now a perfectly fine police chief is burning up the pavement to get over here and cut me off the air.

"I imagine His Honor the Mayor told him to catch me or drop out of public life. A police chief's life is hard, like a radio announcer's. He has to say and do as he's told. If they tell him to make an arrest, he has to make it stick.

"But don't worry. I've an idea that a cab will get me away from here before he can catch up with me. I'm planning a nice winter in California, so for now, this is a vastly more contented Bill Reese, wishing your kiddies pleasant dreams, and yourselves a pleasant retreat in Heaven, where all radio commercials fail to reach you. WZRX gratefully signing off."

Reese jumped to his feet.

"You think the police heard that last part?" he asked quickly.

Langly grimaced.

"They couldn't afford to miss it," he said.

The sirens were close now. Reese switched the light out quickly. He ran to the front window and looked down at the cab parked at the curb. Leaning out of the window he saw the police enter the street about two blocks north. He leaned out and waved his arm.

The taxi driver waved back and his grinning face was visible under the street lamp. The motor started with a roar and the empty cab rolled away in the opposite direction from which the police approached. Reese stepped back into the darkness and waited. They had fallen neatly for the trick. The police car never hesitated. It whirled past doing sixty and went out of sight. The cab had a nice start.

"Come on," Langly said. "They'll

catch him a mile or so away. They'll head back pronto."

He led the way along the hall. Reese was aware of a shadow that darted into the room ahead of him.

He skidded to a stop.

"Wait a minute," he shouted. Langly was at the head of the stairs. He stopped.

Reese jerked the door open quickly. Sharon Mellow, lovely and very frightened, stood in the darkened room. Reese's jaw dropped.

"What the . . ."

"I'm sorry," she said quickly. "I've been looking for you everywhere."

Reese was bewildered. He'd seen the girl only once before, and then from a distance.

"Looking for me?"

She came to him quickly, putting her small hand on his arm.

"You're in an awful spot," she said. "We'd better get out of here. I'll explain later."

"You'd better," he said, then he stopped short and smiled down at her. That damned truth serum, he thought quickly. It's still working.

"You're beautiful," he said. "You're the prettiest thing I've ever seen."

The girl blushed.

"Can I believe that?" she asked. "I've been wondering when you'd notice me."

He drew her into the hall quickly.

"You're in a bad spot here," he said.

"I guess we'd all better scram. Besides, I'm not good at telling the truth. I might be sorry for it when I'm my own sour, lying self again."

She smiled, then slipped past him into the hall.

"Heard your broadcast," she said as she went down the steps. "It was wonderful. Dad will kill you when he finds you."

Langly was waiting for them by the

door downstairs.

Reese chuckled.

"You mean the broadcast was wonderful, or the fact that Pop Mellow will do away with me?"

Sharon opened the door. She leaned against him slightly.

"You tell the truth and so I think you're nice. I wouldn't have you get hurt for the world. My car. It's across the drive. You'll let me drive you somewhere?"

Reese could hear the siren that had died out a moment ago, rise again, coming from the south.

"By all means," he said and pushed her gently toward the car. "Drive us to California if you want, but fast."

"I wanted to tell you something," she said.

"It will wait."

Langly opened the door and crawled in. Reese pushed Sharon in beside Langly and ran around to the driver's seat. He found the key, turned it and started the motor. It purred softly as he eased the big job into the street.

A car was coming toward them, red light flashing back and forth on the front of it.

Reese groaned.

"Here goes a new speed record," he said, and climbed hard on the gas pedal. They shot ahead like a small rocket ship, cutting corners in a direct route toward Union Station.

"I CAN'T figure that girl out," Langly said. "First she lets you call her old man seven kinds of a fool, then she helps us escape. I had a feeling she wanted to tell you something if you'd only given her time."

Reese leaned back comfortably in the soft chair. The coach wasn't crowded. They found room in the smoking-car and already through the frosted windows, he could see the flash

of passing poles and hear the click of rails below. They were well away from town, with the first stop a hundred miles from trouble. Reese had time to think now and his thoughts followed various, and not entirely pleasant, channels.

To begin with, he wished he hadn't ditched Sharon Mellow at the station. She must have had something important to tell him. Something that prompted her to follow him and Langly all over town.

The girl was the sweetest thing that had ever happened to him. Even with that damned truth serum wearing off, Reese knew he'd enjoy telling her a lot of things.

She hadn't tried to hold him back at the station. It would hardly have been right for her to follow him farther. He knew she wanted a moment, but the train hadn't waited and they had pulled out with Sharon standing on the platform, her shoulders drooping a trifle.

"Now that it's over, what good did it do?"

Reese's question had no answer. Langly also was beginning to experience a let-down feeling. They both liked the old home town. It wasn't easy to leave it.

"If Randon hadn't started all this we'd be all right," Langly said bitterly. "It's like a drunk. We blow our tops off and then sober up. In the full light of day it doesn't seem half as much fun, does it?"

Daylight came soon, giving them time to stare across bleak farms and down the back alleys of small towns through which the train sped. At eight o'clock they found the diner and had breakfast. Reese had developed a strange ache in the pit of his stomach. A swell case of homesickness. How he could go on letting that vision of Shar-

on Mellow trouble him was beyond Bill Reese's reasoning power.

She seemed so much at home with him. Seemed to understand just what made him tick. Yet, he wasn't like the run-of-the-mill radio ham. They were satisfied to go along each day, reading the junk that was passed to them.

Couldn't men like Howard Shelton, the owner of WZZB, understand why Reese *had* to use originality? Shelton saw nothing beyond the safe, weekly income of a few small accounts. Random was no better. Old man Mellow himself couldn't visualize anything new in advertising.

Sharon? Somehow she was different. She had heard the broadcast. She heard him tear her own father to pieces, and still she didn't want to pull out his hair.

The train pulled into Oxford at noon. The town was a little larger than most, supporting a fine station and a row of cabs that seemed busy enough to indicate a large city somewhere beyond the walls of the station. Reese stepped down from the car and found a lunchroom in the station. Langly came in as soon as he could check leaving time, and they had lunch.

FIFTEEN minutes passed. They approached the train to find an excited little group of people standing near their car.

Reese walked into the trap before he knew what was happening. As they approached, the circle of men opened and Sharon Mellow stepped toward him. Reese stopped, the blood draining from his face, and recognized Ward Williams, Chief of Police, and James Mellow. The others, evidently plainclothes men, he didn't recognize.

He made no attempt to run for it. His eyes were on Sharon. Williams came forward.

"Langly and Reese, the G-men of the air!" His voice was heavy with sarcasm. "We made a plane trip over here to greet you birds. Will you fly back as doves of peace or do we get tough?"

Langly's mouth dropped open but he remained silent. Reese stared at the girl. She smiled uncertainly.

"I had to tell them," she said. "You see, I didn't have a chance to tell you . . ."

"Keep it to yourself," Reese said angrily. "I thought you were a pal. Now you turn stool-pigeon. We're in a nice little spot, thanks to your help."

The girl bit her lips, her cheeks turned pink.

"If you don't care to hear . . ."

"Nothing," Reese snapped. "Nothing you can say will ring pleasantly in my ears."

Williams and his men closed in.

"Back home again," the Chief said. "We need you there. The plane is waiting and a welcoming committee is ready. Let's move."

They moved. A car was waiting. Reese found himself and Langly pushed into it quickly. He looked around to find Sharon and her father getting into another a few yards away.

Wedge firmly between Police Chief Williams and Bob Langly, Reese had ample time for thought as they raced toward the airport.

The half-formed opinion of Sharon Mellow had hit the dust. She was lower than a worm in his estimation. A fit companion for a fat, conceited old ass of a father. He hoped the whole Mellow family would drown in their own liquor.

THE Mayor himself could have had no larger greeting committee than the throng of people who waited at the doors of Station WZZB for Bill

Reese's return. Howard Shelton was there, and with him, Sharon Mellow, her father and every officer of Mellow's Fine Whiskey, Inc. Curt Randon, his nose bandaged, a plaintive look on his dark face, stood by the curb with his partner, Walter Phillips. His Honor the Mayor waited in the hall, several of his personal cronies lined up behind him in order of their importance.

Reese, puzzled because both he and Langly had escaped the city jail for the time being, stepped out of the car hesitantly. The police chief followed him, a broad grin on his face.

Reese took one look at the mob who bore down upon him, then turned hurriedly to the chief.

"We need protection," he said. "I'll admit the crime was bad, but I'm in no condition to fight my way out of this mess. How about a ride downtown and a nice quiet cell?"

Langly sidled close to him. Together, suspicion etched on their tired faces, they faced the crowd.

Curt Randon was the first to reach Reese. His face beamed an "all is forgiven" smile.

"Now look here, Reese," Randon pleaded. "You did that broadcast from my studio. I demand a part of anything you get for it."

Mellow faced Randon, his cheeks puffed, eyes narrowed.

"Reese is my property," he yelled. "He started a program for me. He's got a contract signed, or at least Shelton has. Reese has to go through with it. . . ."

Bill Reese swallowed hard.

"No jail, no punishment?" he asked. "Contracts, obligations. I don't get it."

His Honor the Mayor had tired of waiting inside. He came out, followed by his assemblage, and pushed his way to Reese's side. His fat hand was outstretched.

"William Reese?"

Bill nodded.

"Yes, sir. Guess I took a few cracks at you."

His Honor grasped Reese's hand, pumping it quickly.

"Reese, you did us all good. We're a bunch of softies. Right now I'm offering you a thousand dollars a broadcast to tell this town one night a week that we're improving our system and cleaning up crime. You can do it, Reese, and I want you on my side."

On the edge of the crowd, a flashbulb exploded. The newspapers were getting a good account of His Honor's turning over the new leaf. Reese grinned.

"You'll have to ask Sharon," he said.

His Honor grunted.

"Sharon?" he said impatiently. "Who the hell is Sharon?"

REESE pushed his way past the Mayor, edged between Randon and James Mellow and stood before Sharon Mellow. Her eyes were soft, and he thought he could see a tear on her cheek.

"I guess I've been a sort of damned fool," he said. "Could you—that is . . . ?"

She nodded, not trusting her voice.

Reese went on.

"You were trying to tell me not to run away?"

She leaned close to him.


"I tried to tell you that Dad liked your broadcast, that is, after I made him understand that it was something new. That it was selling more whiskey than we'd ever sold before. I found out when I returned to station WZZB that the fan mail was piling in. Dad was ready to triple your wages to get you back. You—you just wouldn't listen."

Around him, Reese heard the uproar—

(Concluded on page 207)

ROMANCE OF THE ELEMENTS—

A GEM THAT'S EDIBLE!



SODIUM CHLORIDE IS COMMON SALT, BUT IT IS RATED "TOPS" AMONG MINERALS! YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT IT. SALT WAS A "MUST" OFFERING TO THE ANCIENT GODS. MOULDED SALT CAKES STAMPED, WERE USED AS CURRENCY IN TIBET. "SALARY" MEANS "SALT / MONEY," AN ALLOWANCE GIVEN TO ROMAN SOLDIERS.





EGYPTIAN

MORTICIANS PICKLED RICH MUMMIES IN SALT WATER FOR 70 DAYS. CHEAP JOBS WERE GIVEN 7-DAY SALINE BATHS! ANCIENT FISH MUMMIES, SOAKED IN SODA-BEARING LAKES, WRAPPED IN LINEN AND COATED WITH CLAY, STILL HAVE SHINY SKINS; ACTUALLY LOOK FRESH-CAUGHT!



SALTED FISH

TICKLED PATRICIAN ROMAN PALATES. SALT WAS USED IN TANNING; FOR GLAZING POTTERY. MIXED WITH OIL, IT ACTED AS A PRESERVATIVE. IN THE 4th CENTURY, THEY COOLED LIQUIDS WITH WATER CONTAINING SALT.

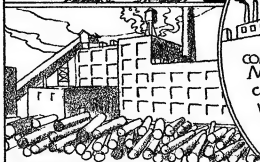


SODIUM AND CHLORIDE DIVORCED WHEN TENNANT OF GLASGOW MIXED SALT WITH MANGANESE, TREATED WITH VITRIOL, AND REFINED THE RESULTING GAS FOR BLEACHING CLOTH. HE OPENED A GLYDESIDE PLANT IN 1799.

SODIUM By Gordon McLean & Rod Ruth



WHEN NAPOLEON LEARNED THAT BRITAIN'S DAVY HAD ISOLATED SODIUM ELECTRO-CHEMICALLY, HE PRESENTED GAY-LUSSAC AND THENARD WITH A SUPER-POWERFUL BATTERY! BEFORE IT WAS INSTALLED, THESE TWO FRENCH SAVANTS GOT SODIUM BY HEAT-TREATING CAUSTIC ALKALI WITH IRON.



SCIENTISTS SAY THAT THE OCEAN'S ROCK SALT, SPREAD EVENLY OVER THE WORLD'S DRY LAND WOULD REACH TO A DEPTH OF ABOUT 400 FEET!

SOME SAVANTS FIGURED THE EARTH'S AGE BASED ON THE SODIUM-CONTENT OF THE SEAS. A BIG SODIUM USE TODAY IS IN PULP MILLS UTILIZING ALKALINE PULPING; LIQUORS IN THE PRODUCTION OF CHEMICAL WOOD PULP.



Farmers COMPLAINED BITTERLY WHEN JAMES MUSPRATT MADE SODA, COMMERCIALY, AT VAUXHALL ROAD, LIVERPOOL IN 1822. HYDROCHLORIC ACID GAS FROM HIS FACTORY RUINED CROPS, AND WRECKED THEIR BUILDINGS.

SODIUM is number 11 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is Na , and its atomic weight is 22.997. Sodium is a soft, malleable, silvery metal. It occurs very abundantly as common salt. Its density is 0.971; its melting point is 97.5° ; its boiling point is 877.5° . It is the most important of the alkali metals. Sodium tarnishes quickly in air, and burns, when heated in air or oxygen to form sodium peroxide. (Next Issue: The Romance of Sulphur.)

HEROES DIE HARD

By HENRY GADE

THE United States Coast Guard cutter *Bertram* plowed through the black, rolling valleys of the North Atlantic. Water, breaking over her rail, froze in frosty, white layers on the deck, and welded the depth bombs into a solid chunk of ice. It was after midnight. To the starboard, stodgy tramps and the sleek new freighters of the convoy were struggling to keep up. The sea was so rough that the starshells showed only endless, rolling mountains of water. They hid the convoy from friendly as well as enemy eyes.

Somewhere, the wolfpack was waiting. Submarines ready to discharge death from their snouts the instant they could slip in under cover of darkness and pick off a fat prize of the merchant marine.

Captain Wells Arthur of the *Bertram* came topside swathed in heavy, sheepskin-lined boots and helmet. A pipe, short and well chewed, hung from his mouth. His eyes, though twinkling, held the tempered edge of a man who had fought the north seas for months, and thus far won every battle.

The *Bertram* was running heavily to port, zig-zagging along the outer edge of the convoy. Perhaps half a mile away, a blinker signal started its light message across the void. Captain Wells Arthur found his way to the bridge. He consigned the pipe to his pocket and waited until the signalmen finished with their work. The wind screamed about him as though the sea resented man's intrusion.

A red-faced, well-padded man turned from the signal lamp. He grinned at Captain Arthur, leaned close to his ear and shouted loudly above the storm.

"Little nasty tonight, sir. It's that English cutter, the *Hamstead*. Signals there's a sub somewhere astern. Want to turn and have a crack . . . ?"

Arthur shook his head.

"As first mate, Briggs, you'd have me all over the ocean every time a Nazi pokes his nose above water."

His eyes were laughing but his words carried weight.

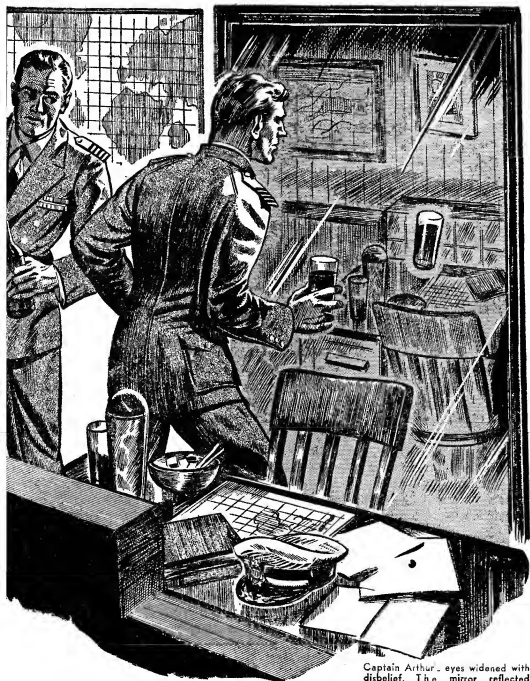
First Mate Eram Briggs grinned back at him.

"Hate to leave all the fun to the *Hamstead*, sir," he said, and turned once more to the sea. With his night glass, Briggs studied the mountains and valleys of water that rushed in limitless confusion beyond the steel bulk of the *Bertram*.

For five minutes no human voice interrupted the howl of the storm. Then, to the east again, a new series of star shells went up. They broke with dazzling light high in the sky, spaced evenly over the convoy.

Briggs, his eyes scanning the surface, froze to attention. He studied the water, bracing himself against the rail, then whirled toward Wells Arthur. This time there was no mistaking the excitement, the ill-concealed joy in his expression. Briggs was waiting for another crack at a German sub.

"Take a look, sir," he said eagerly. "Just to the starboard. A sub, or I'm



Captain Arthur's eyes widened with disbelief. The mirror reflected everything—except him!

The Coast Guard cutter Wallace had been reported sunk by enemy action. How, then, was she able to aid a sister ship?

an Irish potato."

Arthur took the glasses quickly. For a long time he watched the horizon. When he lowered the glass, his face was pale. Not the white of fear, but the bloodless, unreal look of one who has seen a dead man stir in his grave.

"Briggs." The glasses were limp in his gloved hand. "Briggs, take another look and tell me I'm loony."

BRIGGS seemed to fathom what was in his captain's mind. He took the night glass as though it were something holy. He hesitated, then studied the horizon. But not for long. When he turned again, his lips were in a straight, hard line. The once red cheeks were washed clean of color.

"It don't look as though we'll get a crack at that sub."

Wells Arthur shook his head.

"You—saw what I did?"

Briggs nodded, then stiffened as though determined not to believe what his eyes had revealed.

"But—it's not right, Captain Arthur. It *can't* be the *Wallace*! She went down six months ago."

Arthur shrugged.

"That's what I keep telling myself," he said grimly. "Yet we both saw that sub sink just now. We might try to tell ourselves that it was shelled by the *Hamstead* . . . ?"

Briggs looked as though he wanted to be sick.

"Yes, sir," he said, "if we hadn't both seen the name *Wallace* painted across her bow. You did see it, didn't you?"

Wells Arthur nodded.

"Twice," he said. "I stood by the rail during that first trip out and saw the *Wallace* go to the bottom. Yet, on two occasions since that night, we've seen a ship of her type dart in for the kill."

For a while neither of them spoke.

Then the signal light on the *Hamstead* started to blink again.

"*Sub sunk by another cutter. Shall we stand by?*"

"What shall we tell 'em, Captain?"

Wells Arthur frowned.

"What *can* we tell them? To proceed at full speed and keep their eyes open. We can't start talking about a phantom ship."

"Yes, sir." Briggs turned to the signalman who had missed the entire conversation. Wells Arthur leaned over the rail and waited until Briggs returned to his side.

"It—it can't be the *Wallace*, can it?" Briggs wanted to believe in something solid—anything to clear his mind of doubt.

Wells Arthur smiled softly.

"No," he said, "it can't. Just remember that when you're around the crew. Whatever else we believe, we have to be sure that the cutter we saw tonight wasn't the *Wallace*."

He turned abruptly and went below. The *Bertram* sped ahead, mist floating coldly over her decks, congealing into a heavy crystal camouflage.

First Mate Briggs removed his gloves and blew on his fingers. He stomped up and down the deck, stopping occasionally to stare back at the empty, plunging sea behind him. Once he shook his head, as though trying to convince himself that the German sub had gone down of its own accord.

It might have crash-dived. It could have been his imagination that brought a swift, clean-lined ghost ship into his line of vision.

CAPTAIN WELLS ARTHUR had a tough job and he knew it. The convoy to Murmansk had twenty days of sailing before it would anchor in the slushy ice of the Russian port.

It wasn't possible to get every pound

of cargo safely across. It *was* possible to see that Hitler's wolf pack didn't get more than a small share of booty, and that at a high price.

He sat below, wondering what the day would bring. Nights were the worst. At night the subs surfaced, crept in among the freighters and picked them off before they were spotted. Last night one of the cutters had got a sub. He arose from his breakfast and went on deck.

Yes, last night he had even imagined that the lost cutter *Wallace* had returned for the kill. With the sun cutting a cold, hard pattern through the clouds, and hundreds of freighters in sight, spread out across a dark sea, last night's thoughts were hard to collect.

Not that Wells Arthur hadn't thought of the *Wallace* after retiring. He had thought and dreamed of little else. The *Wallace* and his friend Captain Howard had turned in a good record. That is, before Jim Howard had stood on his own bridge and gone plunging to the bottom with half his ship blown away by a German torpedo.

Wells Arthur noticed Briggs coming toward him along the frozen deck. He returned Briggs' salute.

"Good morning, sir." Briggs' eyes were red from lack of sleep. "We got most of the ice cleaned away, and the guns are ship-shape. Haven't seen a thing since daybreak. Thought I might get forty winks."

Arthur wanted to talk about last night. There was a loneliness within the big man that brought him close to the mate. Briggs and he alone shared a secret that was becoming more and more troublesome in his mind. He decided against any further discussion.

"By all means," he said. "I'll call you if anything happens. Turn in for the day and rest up."

Briggs started to leave, hesitated,

and stared hard at the captain.

"About last night, sir. You don't think we ought to check up and find out if any of the other cutters might have taken a crack at that sub?"

Wells Arthur shook his head.

"Is it necessary?" he asked.

Briggs' chin stiffened ever so slightly and his answer was low.

"No sir, I think not."

He turned and moved slowly down the deck.

THE convoy went smoothly enough that morning. Shortly after noon First Mate Briggs came on deck, avoided the captain, and took his post on the bridge. A few freighters had fallen behind during the night. Now they managed to catch up. The sun was fairly warm but the water retained that frosty whiteness that partly veiled its green depths.

At two in the afternoon the *Hamstead's* blinker started to signal urgently from the opposite flank of the convoy. Briggs stood alert behind the signalman, then, with the message decoded, hurried to the captain's side.

"The *Hamstead* has picked up a sub motor somewhere near," he said. "They're going to toss a few cans over and try to knock her out."

Wells Arthur forgot the *Wallace* then. That sub wouldn't be alone. They hunted in packs, and there must be a number of them to chance a daylight attack.

"Signal the cutters to keep a sharp eye." He strode quickly to the rail. "Come about and cross the *Hamstead's* stern at about three hundred yards. Perhaps we can pick up what they miss."

Briggs moved swiftly into the wheel house. Every man was at his post. The K guns were loaded and the fuse box ready for business. The *Bertram*

swung about in a wide circle and zig-zagged far behind the *Hamstead*. Ten minutes—fifteen. Three depth charges went overboard from the *Hamstead*. Water shot into the air in geysers of roaring, pounding hate. No oil on the surface. The *Hamstead* moved back into its course, protecting an exposed flank.

The *Bertram* was zig-zagging skillfully, listening, waiting.

"Periscope dead ahead!"

The cry came from a loader somewhere on the forward deck.

"Bring her about," Wells Arthur shouted. "Keep a sharp eye for . . ."

"Torpedo dead across the starboard rail." The cry held no fear, only a plea for urgent action.

"Give her all the speed she'll take. . . ."

Every man was alert now, wondering where it would hit.

The *Bertram* dodged cleverly, like a trained thing, alive and vibrant in every plate. Wells Arthur watched the periscope dip and disappear below the waves. He saw the *Hamstead*, at least he thought so at the time, slip in swiftly across his bow. Then a splitting, blinding roar of sound and flame. The *Bertram* leaped into the air and keeled over sharply. A cry went up all along the deck. Then a second explosion. In spite of his own ship and the apparently hopeless condition it faced, Wells Arthur couldn't take his eyes away from the ship ahead of him.

The other cutter had slipped across in front of the *Bertram*, so close that he could see the men on her decks. It hit something hidden just under the surface of the water. Then everything was confusion.

The black, oily entrails of a Nazi submarine spewed up to the surface. The other cutter hesitated, its bow breaking clean out of the water, then

slid backward. The sub, or what was left of it, bounced lazily to the surface. The conning tower was crushed and broken open like a badly smashed tin can. It rolled over on one side and sank again, this time to its grave.

Wells Arthur watched the cutter that had rammed the sub as it stopped its backward motion, gained speed and zig-zagged swiftly away. At that instant he was completely unaware that his own ship had been put out of action. He had forgotten that this was his problem, his hour of decision. Words formed on his lips. Words of mute understanding.

"The *Wallace*," he whispered. "And I'm God damned if *that* was any ghost ship."

THE torpedo had been well placed.

The *Bertram* was sinking slowly. Yet, throughout that cold gray afternoon, Captain Wells Arthur couldn't give up his ship. He warned the *Hamstead* and other cutters to stay well away from the limping *Bertram*. All pumps were working and the cutter moved ahead at half speed. It was useless. The entire center section of the *Bertram* had caved in. The plates were torn apart beyond even temporary repair.

Interwoven with his own worries, Arthur couldn't forget that almost magic appearance of the *Wallace*. Oddly enough, none of his crew noticed just what cutter had rammed the sub. They took it for granted that the *Hamstead* had been there when needed. The rush of work during the long afternoon discouraged any further discussion of the incident.

It was during that dead, exhausted period before sundown that Captain Arthur made his decision. First Mate Briggs came to him in the tiny cabin that served as sleeping quarters and

general office for the commander of the *Bertram*. Briggs opened the door softly.

"The men told me you just came down here, Captain. I think we'd better give her up as lost."

Wells Arthur raised a tired head from his desk and nodded.

"I know," he said. "Signal the *Hamstead* to come alongside just as soon as it's dark. We'll send the crew aboard her. I—had to have a minute alone." He started to stand, then, drunk with exhaustion, he sank back, head on his hands. "It's—hard to give up . . ."

Briggs put a calloused hand on the captain's shoulder.

"I know, sir. We all hate like hell . . ."

He turned, without finishing his sentence, and bolted from the cabin.

ALL hands were on deck, life jackets tied, when the cutter *Hamstead* came alongside. The Atlantic was once more a heaving black blanket of water. Captain Arthur watched his men as, one by one, they slid across the life rope to the restless deck of the English boat. Briggs waited until the last.

"All the men are over," the First Mate said. "You'll—be coming behind me, Captain?"

His was an anxious question. He knew that Wells Arthur hated to leave the cutter. Knew that he might never consent to abandon his ship.

Wells Arthur nodded. His head was heavy. His eyes were barely opened slits, red with grief. Still, his shoulders remained erect and his feet were spaced well apart, firm against the slanted deck.

"I'll follow," he said, and turned away.

Briggs slipped into the life belt, fastened himself securely and waved

for the crew of the *Hamstead* to haul away.

It's doubtful if Captain Wells Arthur would have left his ship had he a choice. No such choice was left to him. Before Briggs was half way across the gap of wild water that separated the two cutters, the *Bertram* heeled over sharply, and a moan of wind and water went through her empty vitals. Water, tons of green, slush-filled water, poured over her deck and she plunged below the Atlantic.

Briggs was hauled upward out of the sea and stood gasping for breath, watching the *Bertram* sink. He was sure that Captain Wells Arthur was at the rail for a minute, holding on tightly, his head thrown back as though defying the elements. Then the *Bertram* was no more. A crushed, battered lifeboat floated idly at the spot where the cutter had vanished.

Briggs choked and turned away.

CAPTAIN WELLS ARTHUR took hours to wake up. At first, drifting upward out of pale green water, he was aware of a new warmth that bathed his body.

His heavy sheepskins were gone. He opened his eyes slowly, to find that he was clad only in rough pajamas and tucked securely into a warm bunk. He stared around, bewildered to find that, with his own ship gone, someone had been able to save him from death.

The cabin in which he was lying was small, not unlike his own aboard the *Bertram*. For one wild moment he wondered if he had been dreaming. If the cutter was still intact, able to float.

Then the door opened and any thought of his own ship died with the words that came to his lips.

"Jim Howard!" Wells Arthur lifted himself weakly on one elbow and stared at the stout, warm-eyed man who had

stepped inside the door. "For God's sake, I thought . . ."

Captain Jim Howard of the cutter *Wallace*. Then the *Wallace* hadn't gone down! She was alive, fighting with the rest of them!

And Jim Howard was here, pipe in his teeth, a broad grin on his face.

"H'lo, Wells." Howard crossed the tiny cabin and took Wells Arthur's hand. His grip was firm and warm. "Saw you going down. Figured I could use a man like you aboard the *Wallace*."

Arthur was sitting up now, questions flooding his mind. All the grief and misunderstanding were gone.

"By the gods, Jim!" He watched as Jim Howard sat down easily, applied a match to his pipe and started to puff. "I—I can't believe that you're really alive."

Jim Howard returned the smile, his lips curling slightly, whimsically. A frown creased his forehead.

"I'm here right enough," he said. "Damned good hunting this trip, wouldn't you say?"

It was Wells Arthur's turn to frown.

"For all but the crew of the *Bertram*," he said. "It's some comfort that we all got away safely, though how I managed, I still don't know."

"Fished you out of the water, that's all," Jim Howard said. He stood up, crossed the room and fumbled around in a locker. "Here's a bit of port I saved for such an occasion." He poured a glass of the stuff and held it for Arthur.

Wells Arthur's eyes were not on the glass or the liquid in it.

On the far side of the cabin a full length mirror had been built into the panel. Jim Howard was in a direct line with that mirror. He, Wells, was also in line with it.

Yet, staring straight at that mirror, he could see neither of them. Just an empty bunk. An empty bunk where he was supposed to be lying.

He was almost sure now. Not quite, but almost.

He stared at Howard, eyes wide with wonder. The ruddy captain stared back, the same unworried grin on his face.

"Jim . . ." Arthur hesitated, then blurted it out in one breath. "Jim—I thought you and your crew were lost—dead. Good lord, Jim, I saw the *Wallace* go down with my own eyes."

"You felt the *Bertram* go down under you, and you went with it, didn't you?" Howard asked the question softly, almost gently.

"But—that was a miracle, I know. You—Jim, I'd have sworn that I'd have to die before I ever would see you again."

Captain Jim Howard of the cutter *Wallace* leaned over and placed the glass on the table. When he turned once more the frown was gone. A soft smile parted his lips. He put a firm hand on Wells Arthur's shoulder.

They stared at each other, and Howard's lips formed a single word. He drawled it in a lazy, questioning voice.

"Well?"



THE SPIDER'S PROPHECY



IN THE year 1306, Robert Bruce was crowned King of Scotland. Later, his forces were routed by the English and he fled from the country.

One day, while in hiding, Bruce observed a spider trying to fix its web to a beam on the ceiling. The spider failed six times in succession. "Now shall this spider," observed Bruce, "teach me what I am to do, for I also have

failed six times." And in the seventh attempt the spider succeeded in fixing its web to the beam.

Immediately, Bruce emerged from his hiding place, gathered a handful of followers, returned to Scotland, and, after a series of successful campaigns, won the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, after which the English withdrew. Scotland was then acknowledged its full independence!

FANTASTIC SEA JOURNEY

By WILLIAM DECKER

THE sea is not as barren a place as most people are apt to imagine. There are no blank lifeless areas in the sea. Furthermore, the inhabitants of the sea use a three dimensional set-up to its fullest advantage. Life in the sea tends to distribute itself along vertical depth levels. Many different species may occupy the same area of water and still remain isolated from one another because they live at different levels of depth. The set-up is no different than that which we encounter in large apartment buildings.

It would not be wrong to refer to the uppermost level of the sea as the vegetable-garden of the sea, for it is composed of a countless number of plant cells which feed the other lower layers. There are certain requirements to be fulfilled if the uppermost layer of seafloor is to survive. In the first place, all life atop the sea surface must float and keep themselves from sinking. This is not a simple matter and takes ingenuity to accomplish. The green plants must get along without roots and other anchoring devices, for it is impossible to drop an anchor 12,000 feet to the bottom of the sea.

It is a known fact that a body which presents a large surface and keeps its weight at a minimum while doing so is less likely to sink. Therefore, in the effort to create as much surface as is possible, the plants break up into microscopic green cells. It is an easy matter for billions of cells to unite and form an insignificant amount of seaweed. However, this would lead to a diminishing of the amount of surface to bulk and hence it is far wiser for the cells to remain separated.

As a rule the water surface plants are more active than the land plants. Certain plants make use of a fine hair-like structure with which to paddle about atop the surface of the sea. There are also small animals that live in this uppermost region of the sea. How do they keep afloat? One way is by developing the weirdest and most grotesque appearances—by the use of protruding spines, projecting planes, feathery structures; any shape, no matter how fantastic it might appear, in an attempt to present a greater amount of surface per unit amount of weight. Some dilute their living bodies and in this manner make themselves lighter; a good example may be found in the water-swollen jelly-fish. Some organisms attempt to accumulate lighter substances inside themselves and hence decrease their weight. Some, in fact the majority, buoy themselves up by virtue of microscopic liquid balloons present all over the body—making use of fat and oil as a lifting agent. Actually, the most highly efficient

and most highly developed anti-sinking mechanism is the gas-bladder. The gas bladder works on the same principle in water as a lighter than air balloon ascending into the air. Some sea animals have gas glands whose purpose it is to secrete gas into a bladder specially present for that purpose. A few store gas in special compartments found in their shell. Probably the most unique method of forming a lighter-than-water sea balloon is found in the snail (*Glaucus*). He simply harbors a form of bacteria within his stomach noted for its capacity to produce gaseous waste products. As a result of this set-up, mister *Glaucus* has his intestine inflated with gas and therefore made able to float lazily about in the sea minus the worry of sinking.

Gas bladders serve an even more elaborate function in deep seawater. For what could be a more sensitive device for estimating the pressure of the environment about a fish? If the pressure about a fish possessing a gas bladder were to increase, then it is obvious that the gas in the bladder would contract and therefore the fish could be made aware of the increase in pressure. On the other hand, a decrease of pressure would mean an expansion of the gas in the bladder and another possible way of making a fish conscious of a decreasing pressure. While on the subject of pressure, it will do good to clear up certain exaggerated misconceptions. In the first place, it is true that the pressure at the bottom of the sea is enormous when compared to the pressure about us—the pressure at the bottom of a point near the Philippines, approximately 9,788 meters in depth, being more than 960 times the ordinary pressure of air at sea-level. Think of living under a half mile column of mercury, and yet that is analogous to a pressure 960 times the ordinary pressure at sea level. Still, most of the ideas as to why fish die when hauled up from great depth are too pressure conscious and neglect the important factor of change in temperature during the rapid haul. As H. G. Wells points out in his great book, entitled, *The Science of Life*, we must realize the fact that fish hauled up from great depths in the Mediterranean do not suffer the ill-effects which the same type of fish would suffer if hauled up from the same depth in the Atlantic ocean. Why? Simply because the Mediterranean is almost uniform in respect to temperature.

Sea animals must depend upon the plant life for their meal ticket. Since it is imperative that a plant have light if it is to produce its valuable food, we can expect to find the garden of the sea located at the highest floor level—right near

(Concluded on page 151)

CLOAK OF SATAN

By FRANK PATTON

A girl who can actually fly should go over big with a nightclub crowd. At least, Bronson thought so . . . until death stepped in!

RADCLIFF BRONSON'S office was made to order for the big, good-natured night-club owner. The heavy chairs and king-size desk seemed to fit his personality and body.

Bronson's face held that expression of patience he had to use when "Noisy" Malone came in with a new find. "Noisy", thin and nervous, a cigarette hanging in his lips, fidgeted in the chair before the desk. He had been talking almost without interruption for ten min-

utes, when Bronson finally held up his hand.

"Wait a minute." His voice had that quality of ordering people about without hurting their feelings. "I'll admit that the show needs an uplift, Noisy. We were in the red last week. However, we need singers and dancers. What the devil would the Silver Terrace do with a magician act?"

Malone's shoulders drooped.

"But this guy Giraud is different," he protested.

Bronson frowned, but it was a fleeting, quickly hidden expression. He didn't want to hurt Malone's feelings.

"You've picked up a lot of acts before, Noisy," he said. "But somehow you don't get the kind that go over. I need a girl right now, not a magician. If you could find a smart little singer . . ."

Noisy Malone jumped to his feet.

"This guy Giraud has a girl with him," he said eagerly. "Maybe she would fit in."

Bronson shrugged.

"I can't understand why you insist on my seeing Giraud," he said. "Even admitting that the man is clever, why is he working for Mike Humphry? The House of Frivolity is the cheapest burlesque dive in town."

Malone had his argument ready.





Bronson gasped aloud as the bat-like wings began slowly to spread

Bronson was showing interest now. Malone leaned over the desk eagerly.

"This Philip Giraud just came over from France a few months ago," he said. "Escaped from a coast town and showed up in New York without a dime and no idea of what our theaters were all about. He signed with Humphry and now he knows the score. I'm telling you the act is a whizz."

Bronson smiled broadly.

"Barnum went in for big stuff," he said. "That's what I'm after. Any act that hits the stage of the Silver Terrace has to be good enough to jump straight from there into Hollywood. Let's be reasonable. Can this Giraud and his assistant be made into top-flight material? That's what we have to think of."

He settled back comfortably in his chair. Malone hesitated. He had seen Giraud's act a half dozen times in the past week. The boss had given him a lot of chances and thus far Malone hadn't turned up anything good.

"I think I've found the real thing," he said at last. "Will you go watch the act?"

Bronson groaned.

"Okay!" he said. "Call Humphry and tell him to put the magician on as soon as I get there. The girl? Is her part of the act good?"

A broad smile parted Malone's thin lips.

"She flies," he said modestly. "Is that good enough?"

BRONSON leaned forward in his chair, eyes twinkling.

"Remind me to cut your salary!" he said. "I have an idea you've been hitting the bottle pretty hard."

Malone reddened.

"So you don't believe me," he shrugged. "The girl has a pair of fake wings and Giraud pulls some kind of a

gag that makes her look like she really takes off and flutters around in the air."

Bronson clapped a hand over his mouth and stifled a choking laugh.

"Okay," he said when he had gained control of himself. "Let's go see your flying girl friend. If I find out she's a school girl sweetheart who talked you into getting her a break, I'll make you stay sober all next week."

"No chance," Malone insisted. "After you see Philip Giraud, *Magician Extraordinaire*, you'll go out and have a drink with me."

THE House of Frivolty was on South State Street. Its front was so thoroughly plastered with cardboard nudes that the entrance was hard to locate. Bronson scowled as he entered the small, dirty lobby. Bronson hated these dumps worse than poison.

Mike Humphry, the owner, saw them come in. He signaled Malone.

"We'll get the girlie act right off and send the professor out."

Humphry offered his hand to Bronson. "Glad you dropped in, Mr. Bronson. Can't say as the house measures up to your place, but we do our best."

Bronson smiled a little coldly and they went inside. The last pounding notes of a song were cut off as the strip act left the stage hurriedly. The house was filled with loud whistling and hand-clapping. Bronson sat down in a chair near the back of the theater and Malone settled into the cushions beside him.

"It won't take long," Malone said nervously, "Humphry says he'll put Giraud right on."

"I heard him," Bronson answered shortly.

Malone muttered something under his breath. The three-piece band stumbled hurriedly through an introduction and Philip Giraud came swiftly to the stage.

Giraud was a short, swarthy-skinned man. He pushed a coffin-shaped box before him. It was covered with black silk and mounted on a wheeled table.

Philip Giraud stopped in the center of the stage and held up a slim, white hand. He walked to the front of the platform and looked over the audience straight at Bronson.

"Gentlemen, Professor Philip Giraud will, for only a limited time after today, be allowed to offer his act for so little money. There is in the audience an agent who will recognize my worth and place me with the stars where I belong. For this reason I ask for complete silence and respect."

Bronson leaned toward Malone.

"Modest little squirt, isn't he?"

"Wait," Malone said anxiously. "He knows he's good."

Giraud went on for several minutes, talking swiftly as he produced the usual card tricks and rabbit-from-the-hat stuff. Bronson yawned.

"Where's the girl?" he asked. "I'll see her and then we'll get the hell out of here."

Professor Giraud had evidently detected Bronson's bored expression. He dropped the small-time business and went to the head of the covered coffin. The silence on the stage affected the audience. Giraud whipped the cloth from the plain, mahogany box. He lifted the lid slowly and turned once more to the men below him.

"Madame Satan," he said, "consented to accompany me on this trip from France. She agrees that Europe is too hot a place now for even the wife of the devil."

THERE was no humor in the smile that showed his even, white teeth. A snicker went up from the audience. The sound was hushed as the girl sat up in the coffin.

Malone's eyes were on his boss' face. Malone had seen Madame Satan before. He watched Bronson's eyes widen and a slow smile replace the frown that had been continuous since the act started.

The girl, visible from the waist up, was clothed in a flaming red cape. It covered her hair, framing a creamy-skinned, oval face. Her lips were red and full and her eyes, turned toward Bronson, were deep and smoldering as though she had awakened after a long sleep. Wisps of coppery hair escaped from the cape and fell about her neck.

"Madame Satan has been my friend for many years." The little magician stood with one hand on the coffin edge, the other gesturing delicately in the air to illustrate his speech. "It was I who convinced her that she should visit the United States."

The professor was a fraud, Bronson knew, but the girl held his attention. At Giraud's bidding, she took his hand and, standing up, allowed him to lower her to the stage.

Silently she opened the robe and allowed it to fall at her feet.

A sigh escaped Malone's lips. To Bronson's surprise, the girl was not Mike Humphry's type. Queenliness characterized every movement of her lithe, carefully groomed figure.

She faced the audience. Giraud stood behind her, and spreading his arms, fluttered his finger tips in the air.

There was a fluttering, beating sound against the silent air and broad, skin-covered wings spread from her back. She leaned slightly forward and he saw that two bone-like spikes protruded from her head.

Bronson gasped. Someone down front started to chuckle, got a better look and was silent. The illusion was perfect. Bronson realized that he was gripping the arms of his chair. His mouth was dry.

He couldn't tear his eyes away from the girl's face. There was a depth of misery and suffering there that he couldn't plumb. Her lovely shoulders drooped and her lips were parted as though she were about to weep.

"Madame Satan," Giraud's voice was harsh, almost brutal, "I say it is time now to display your skill."

Her movements were so mechanical that the trick seemed quite evident. Madame Satan, looking more like an angel, flapped her wings and arose from the stage into the air. She fluttered there for a moment and dropped to her feet once more. The wings folded behind her.

"Nuts," Malone said. "The last time I saw her she really put it over. Flew around in plain sight. She acts as though she wants to miss her big chance."

Bronson said nothing. He watched the girl back slowly to the coffin and climb in. The robe was once more about her body. Giraud was visibly displeased with her. His manner was abrupt and he left the stage almost at once, his lips pressed in a thin hard line of anger.

BRONSON stood up and went to the lobby. He found a Havana in his pocket, took a light from Malone and stood in the darkness, a puzzled expression on his face.

"The babe could do better than that," Malone insisted eagerly. "Last time I saw her . . ."

"Never mind." Bronson put his hand on Malone's shoulder. "You've done all right this time, Noisy."

"Then you like him?"

Bronson's jaw stiffened.

"Frankly, I never hated a man so much at first sight as I do our little French friend."

"I don't get it."

"To hell with the act." Bronson

turned and went toward Mike Humphry's office. "I want Madame Satan. Once she gets away from Giraud and his wings, we've got the prettiest thing the Silver Terrace has ever presented. Madame Satan has class and beauty. If she can sing or dance, so much the better. If not, we'll put her in front of the spot-lights and she'll go over on her beauty alone."

He placed a hand on the door knob of Humphry's office. Before he could pull the door open, Humphry came out hurriedly.

"Dammit, get out of the——" Humphry stopped, his face violently red. "Excuse me, Mr. Bronson. Thought you were one of the dames. Well, what did you think of the act?"

Bronson wasted no time.

"I want to see the girl," he said.

"Of course, if you take the act for the Silver Terrace, I'll expect a little . . ."

Bronson's eyes narrowed.

"I always pay for what I take," he said. "Do you call the girl or shall I go backstage?"

A cunning smile lighted Humphry's face.

"If you think you can get her without taking the professor," he said, "you're crazy. I know. I tried it."

Bronson turned and went down the dark corridor toward the rear of the building.

"Remember what I said," Humphry called after him. "I want a cut."

"Shut up," Noisy Malone said quickly. "Can't you see the boss is upset?"

He followed Bronson toward the dingy dressing rooms at the rear of the stage.

PHILIP GIRAUD'S back was visible in the open door of one of the dressing rooms. He was waving his arms wildly and a torrent of French poured

from his lips. Bronson waited quietly, half hidden behind a curtain. The Frenchman entered the room and approached the girl sitting on the bed. Her head was bent forward and she was crying. Giraud went close to her.

From the shouting tirade that escaped Giraud's lips, Bronson picked up one phrase.

"... *rendezvous avec Satan* . . ."

Rendezvous with Satan!

The girl nodded and lifted her head. Tears were pouring from her eyes. Giraud leaned over coolly and slapped her face.

Cold anger flooded Bronson. He was across the hall and into her room as quickly and silently as a cat. The Frenchman's back was still turned to the door. If the girl saw Bronson, she gave no sign. Malone, at the door grinned broadly as Bronson grasped the Frenchman's shoulder and jerked him around roughly. Giraud started to swear, caught Bronson's fist squarely on the nose and crumpled to the floor.

A gasp of surprise escaped the girl's lips.

"Who—what was that?"

Bronson turned to her.

"I didn't mean to pull the brave knight act," he said quietly, "but I saw him strike you and so I took a crack at him." . . .

Her hand reached out falteringly and he took her fingers in his.

"I'm—I'm so grateful," she said.

"But you shouldn't have hit him."

Bronson felt the coolness of her fingers, and the way they clung to his hand as though afraid to let go.

"I'm surprised you let him get away with it."

"I can't help it," she answered falteringly. "He thought I spoiled his act today. I try to please but sometimes I'm frightened. I can't see during the day. The light blinds me . . ."

She withdrew her hand from his.

"*Blind!*" The word escaped Bronson's lips in a choked whisper. "And he treats you like that?"

A low whistle escaped Noisy Malone's lips. With one arm he dragged Giraud from the floor and stood him on his feet.

"Shall I hit him this time?"

BRONSON didn't answer. The girl had leaned forward, her face buried in her hands. The robe fell away slightly from her shoulders. Bronson's eyes followed the whiteness of her back. A rough growth was visible between the shoulder-blades of Madame Satan's back. From the growth, two wings hung, with parchment-like skin stretched over their bony ribs. They were folded tightly around her body so that the robe hid them from a casual glance.

Bronson's fists clenched tightly and perspiration stood out on his forehead.

He had seen circus freaks, but never anything like.

She seemed aware of the sudden silence and drew the robe more tightly around her.

"I think you had better go now, before Philip Giraud recovers."

Bronson laughed, determined that his voice would not betray the shock of what he had seen.

"You listen to me, young lady. My name is Radcliff Bronson. In spite of the Radcliff, I'm not a bad guy after you know me. You aren't going to take any more of Giraud's beatings. We'll take you out for dinner and after that, you and I will talk business."

"Business," she drew away from him. "But, I can't leave Philip. Without me he would have no act."

Malone dropped the inert figure of Giraud to his former position on the floor.

"If you don't want to hit him again,"

he said, "let's get out of here."

Bronson's arm went around the girl's waist. She protested, trying to break away from him but he picked her up easily.

"Don't be afraid of me," he said. "I don't go around slapping blind girls. You're going to get some breaks for a change."

Perhaps it was the kindly, concerned voice that reassured her.

"Please, make sure Giraud is all right," she begged.

Bronson looked at the prone figure of the magician.

"He'll recover soon enough," he said. "Too damned soon. He deserves more than he got."

THE following days were busy for Rad Bronson. He knew very little more of Madame Satan than he had that first day at Mike Humphry's. After they left she had consented to eat with him and insisted that they dine in a tiny, dark restaurant on South State. She told him that her eyes, long accustomed to dark places, were able to function only where the light was dim. He accepted this as truth, but the wings and the horn-like growths upset him more than he liked to admit.

Gradually she seemed to forget Philip Giraud, or at least her fear of him. She trusted Bronson, and clung to him every moment they were together. "Noisy" Malone found a room for her in one of the best hotels in town. Bronson, without consulting the girl, went about the task of building up her name as the mysterious Madame Satan.

Every paper in town came to Bronson when publicity items were released from his office. They had helped him build up a hundred stars and his press stories were always good for an increase in circulation. Madame Satan, unknown even to herself, suddenly be-

came the talk of the town. Bronson made sure that she received a wardrobe from the finest designers the city could supply.

Madame Satan went twice each day for a stroll in the park. Always her body was covered by the long, crimson robe and the remote beauty of her sad face captured every photographer who aimed his camera at her. Her blindness prevented her from finding out what went on, and Malone, who always accompanied her, kept the secret well.

Bronson stayed away, afraid that his presence would give the buildup away. Finally he approached her about an appearance at the Silver Terrace.

He went to her hotel early in the evening, confident that the girl was the greatest discovery he had ever made. He took the elevator to the eighth floor and, hesitating before her door, thought he could hear singing from within her room. Her voice was low and husky with emotion. All the sadness in human experience was woven into the song and it held him spellbound.

Finally he knocked. She came to the door at once.

"May I come in?"

Madame Satan drew her robe tightly around her and stepped back into the little hall.

"Mr. Bronson," she said quietly. "I'm very glad you decided to come. I'm receiving so many nice things. I'm worried about repaying you."

Bronson took off his coat and sat down. It seemed to him that she was more lovely each time he saw her. More pitiful, too, hiding from him the wings that marred the perfection of her body.

"I imagine you've wondered a lot why Malone and I have taken such an interest in you?"

SHE showed instant concern. Bronson had assured her that she would

have an opportunity to repay him. She knew that he was more honest than anyone she had ever met. Yet the happenings of the past few days troubled her greatly. Perhaps she should have remained with Giraud.

"There's so little I can do," she said.

"I disagree." Bronson's voice was eager. "I promised you that this wasn't charity. I'm a business man. I invest money and expect returns."

His voice was steady and expressionless.

"I told you I owned the Silver Terrace. It's the biggest night-club in the city. When I build up a personality, the city turns out to acclaim a new star. It isn't a business of charity. I invest big money and get big returns."

She frowned.

"Surely you don't plan to . . ."

"I plan to make a star of you," he answered abruptly. "I first thought of making a mystery woman of you. Placing your beauty before the people and letting the movie boys fight for you. Sort of in-between man for a screen contract."

A frown wrinkled Madame Satan's smooth forehead.

"Tonight I heard you singing before I came in," Bronson continued. "It convinced me that you are destined to bring Chicago to your feet the first time you sing at the Terrace."

"Oh, no! No, I couldn't."

Her face was deathly white. Fear, deep and terrible, was in her eyes.

"I have known since that first day of the affliction that has troubled you," Bronson watched her closely, sure that he was not betraying his real emotions. "It will make no difference."

"You mean my blindness?"

Bronson arose and took both her hands in his. His voice was suddenly tender.

"I know that you could not remove

your robe without breaking your heart and sending your friends away from you." He felt her fingers clench his tightly. "I saw your back the first time I met you. I ask for no explanation. I know that you are good all the way through. Now, will you sing at the Silver Terrace?"

Her voice, when it finally came, was hushed with wonder.

"You knew, and yet you went on with your plans to help me?"

Bronson's voice was cool and business-like once more.

"Forget that," he said. "It's our secret and we'll share it as partners. Madame Satan will become famous." She shuddered.

"That will be the name under which I appear?"

"Unless you prefer another."

She sank back into her chair, head high as though defying the world.

"No," she answered firmly. "No, I guess that name will fit me best."

"And you don't want to tell me anything more about yourself tonight?"

"No. I'm sorry, because you've been fine and good about everything. I owe you for all the happiness you've given me, and I should confide in you. Tonight I cannot. Please accept my gratitude, as you have before. Perhaps someday I can tell you . . ."

She halted brokenly, and tears welled into her eyes.

Bronson got up and opened the door.

"I'll leave if you promise not to cry."

"I won't cry," she said. "And—you're a grand person."

He went out quickly, closing the door behind him.

MADAME SATAN made her first appearance on schedule. The mammoth Silver Terrace was once more in the black. So much so that Bronson realized the voice and figure

of Madame Satan was his greatest find.

Still a mystery to the public, the girl went to and from the hotel with Noisy Malone, ate in quiet places and always wore one of her lovely robes.

Bronson, jubilant over her success at the club, wondered how long he could go on without facing reality. Sooner or later she must offer an explanation. They had eaten together occasionally, attended a few plays, and she had thanked him endlessly for what he had done. Neither of them mentioned Philip Giraud, although Bronson was aware that the girl worried about her former partner. Nor were her eyes a subject of their conversation. She seemed to see well enough in the darkness, but during the day, it was necessary to lead her carefully lest she stumble and fall.

Bronson faced the upsetting fact that he loved the girl, and yet dared not tell her. He feared more than anything else that Madame Satan would think he pitied her.

THE Silver Terrace had kept Madame Satan's name in bright lights for two weeks. Although she was a great success, the girl still acted sad and aloof from everyone but Bronson and Noisy Malone.

Friday was payday for the employees of the Terrace. Bronson held the girl's check until last, and went anxiously backstage and up the steel stairs to her room. As he approached the door, he heard a man's voice, angry and excited, coming from Madame Satan's room. He stopped just outside.

"*Merveilleux.*" It was Philip Giraud and sarcasm seemed predominate in every word. "You are very successful now, Mademoiselle Colbert. It is silly, is it not, this postponing of fate?"

Bronson couldn't hear the girl's reply. It was low and choked as though

she were crying. Bronson took a step toward the door but Giraud's voice, rising high with anger, stopped him.

"Tomorrow night your time will be exhausted." His voice lowered dramatically. "Madame Satan is a fitting name for you, Mademoiselle. If you change your mind about my offer, I will be nearby."

There was a sudden scuffling beyond the door, the slap of a hand against flesh and the girl cried out in pain.

Bronson pushed the door open. The girl was on the floor, shielding her head with her arms. Giraud stood above her, bending as though to strike again. He straightened as Bronson strode toward him and his face turned a sickly white.

"Pardon, monsieur." He cowered away from Bronson, "I meant no . . ."

Bronson's fist caught him squarely beside the ear, ending the speech abruptly.

"Nice work!" Malone stood in the open door. "Two downs for Giraud and one to go. Where shall I dump him?"

Bronson was shaking with anger.

"Get him out of here before I kill him," he half whispered. "If I ever catch him around here again . . ."

Giraud sat up slowly, rubbing his face with a shaking hand.

"Up, Frenchie." Malone grasped him by the collar and dragged him to his feet. "You and I have a little date outside."

Bronson helped the girl to her feet.

"How long has Giraud been here?" Bronson asked.

Madame Satan sat on the small couch, her head bowed humbly.

"Only for a little while." She looked up, tried to face him and started to cry. "I'm—I'm such a fool. Why can't you go away and stop trying to help? It only makes the whole thing worse."

Bronson sat down beside her. He felt awkward, now that the time for an explanation had come. Alone, he had been able to think of the questions he planned to ask, but now he couldn't remember them.

"He called you Mademoiselle Colbert. Is that your name?"

She nodded.

"Yvonne Colbert," she confessed. "I suppose you had to know someday. I will tell you why he came."

"Not until you're ready."

SHE rose abruptly and walked slowly to the far side of the room. Lifting her arms, she took the cape from her body and tossed it away. She sank slowly to the floor as though unable to stand the shame. Bronson swore under his breath. The bone-like horns protruded from her head. The wings which he had seen before, spread out, fluttering on each side of her body. Tipping her head back defiantly, she said:

"There—you see how well my name fits me? Madame Satan, symbol of the underworld, ready to return to her place under the earth."

Bronson was at her side. He reached down, and lifted her to her feet. He was filled with an anger toward something he could not understand. The girl, Yvonne Colbert, was no creature of hell. She was young and lovely. There must be some explanation. Something that could be done.

"Giraud has something to do with this," he said hoarsely. "He was threatening you."

She put her head against his shoulder and her body shook with sobs.

"He has everything to do with it." She was clinging to him, wondering how much she dared tell. "My name is Yvonne Colbert. I came from a small French village. Philip Giraud was a

citizen of our town. Many years ago he wanted to become a great man of magic. At last, with black magic, he caused Satan to appear before him."

As she talked, Bronson led her to the couch and put the cape and robe about her body. She smiled gratefully and went on:

"Philip Giraud talked with Satan, and they made a bargain. Giraud received a magic cloak. He was to place it over the shoulders of three lovely young girls. The cloak casts a spell that causes anyone who wears it to become a slave of Satan. The spell requires six months to become effective and during the last half of that time, wings and horns grow on the victim."

YVONNE recited her story mechanically, as though repeating each word Giraud had told her. Her fists were clenched tightly in her lap and her face was pale and drawn.

"Philip Giraud sent two girls of our village to their deaths. No one knew this. I, being foolish as they were, jumped at the chance of escaping from a war-torn country to become his aid in America. After he had put the cloak about my shoulders, he told me what was going to happen."

"But why didn't you come to me before?" Bronson demanded.

"Because the magic cloak is in Giraud's possession," Yvonne admitted. "He told me once that perhaps he would release me from the spell. I would only have to put on the same cloak a second time and the wings would vanish. I would be normal and free once more."

"You couldn't find the cloak?"

She shook her head.

"It is in a steel trunk that belongs to Philip Giraud," she said. "I couldn't open it. He has the keys. Until tonight I fully believed that he might

feel sorry for me and break the spell."

"His visit changed your mind?"

Yvonne Colbert shuddered.

"Satan made his bargain well," she said. "He stated that should Philip Giraud at any time fail to keep his part of the bargain, he would have to give his own body in place of the intended victim. You see, he told me that tonight, and laughed at me when I begged for mercy. I didn't dare come to you before. It was all so weird, so unbelievable."

"Don't be frightened," Bronson begged. "We may have to break every bone in Giraud's body, but we'll get that cloak."

NOISY MALONE went to Bronson's office on the run. The boss had sent word that he was in a hurry. Bronson met him at the door. The boss' face was grim.

"Is Giraud still with Mike Humphry at the Frivolty?" Bronson demanded. Noisy looked puzzled.

"Darned if I know," he admitted. "He dragged himself into a cab after I got through with him."

"Get on his trail," Bronson said quickly. "Just as soon as you find out where he is, bring him in here."

"Wait a minute, boss," Malone protested. "How about letting me in on this? Half an hour ago you threw him out. Now you want me to turn the town upside down to find him. What goes?"

Bronson looked grim.

"Life or death for Madame Satan," he said. "Is that enough for you to work on?"

Malone's face sobered.

"Where'll I find you?" he asked.

Bronson was already at the outer door.

"At the Frivolty," he said. "I need Giraud's trunk."

BRONSON heard the clang of fire trucks as he turned on to State Street. The pavement was roped off. A dozen trucks were already on duty.

Mike Humphry's House of Frivolty was in flames. The old structure sent billowing clouds of smoke into the sky. With a strange fear in his heart, Bronson ran through the crowd until he was stopped by the safety ropes. Humphry was standing close by in his shirt sleeves, a wry look on his fat face. Bronson went to Humphry's side.

"Tough luck, Mike," he said.

Humphry turned. His eyes were red with smoke.

"I never seen nothing like it," he groaned. "No insurance, no nothin'. Worst part of it is, I'm afraid to tell them how it happened."

Bronson's facial muscles tightened.

"How's that?"

Humphry looked sick.

"Magic, I'd say," he confessed. "I had a fight with this goof, Giraud. Since you took his girl from the act, he ain't amounted to a thing. I told him so and he said he'd get even with me. Still, I don't think he started the fire."

"Then who?"

"I was back stage just after he left," Humphry said. "He had a heavy trunk that he was gonna send a cab for. I was sitting alone backstage and the trunk was in the middle of the floor. All of a sudden I smelled smoke. I looked around, trying to find out where it came from. Then I seen flames licking right through the side of that steel trunk, like a blow torch was cutting from inside."

Humphry paused, shaking with excitement.

"I ran for a pail of water and damned if the trunk didn't bust wide open before I got back. The whole place was burning in a minute. Smelled like brimstone straight outa' hell."

Satan himself had a hand in this, Bronson thought. Yvonne Colbert was right. Giraud could not change his mind now. Yvonne was doomed. The cloak, she said, was always locked in the trunk. No fire started by man could burn from inside a steel chest and burst out to destroy a building.

Philip Giraud had chosen his third victim so well that Satan was taking no chances of losing her. Bronson murmured something to Mike Humphry and left the scene of the fire. More trucks rolled up as he hurried back to the car.

It was mid-afternoon when he returned to the Silver Terrace. Philip Giraud had said Yvonne would have until tomorrow night. The whole thing was pretty hopeless.

NOISY MALONE was in terrible shape. He had been on Philip Giraud's trail since the previous day. It was close to five in the afternoon of Yvonne Colbert's last day when Malone stumbled into Bronson's office, ready to drop from lack of sleep.

"But I'm telling you, I heard the whole thing," Malone insisted. "I guess you know I been carrying the torch for her just as long as you have. I hated to believe it myself, but my eyes and ears weren't kidding me."

Bronson shook his head. Malone must be wrong.

"I can't believe it, Noisy," he said finally. "I trust you, but you're dead tired. Maybe you fell asleep and dreamed it. Yvonne couldn't do that."

"Listen," he shouted. "I saw the two of them backstage. Giraud must have sneaked in after I kicked him out. He's been around here all day while I been looking for him all over town. They were talking, and I slipped behind a curtain and waited until they passed me. I heard him say, 'Make

sure Bronson is in front of you when the spotlight comes on,' and she nodded. Then Giraud said, 'When he is dead, I will release you. Together, with the money you have saved, we will buy controlling shares of this place. It will be a superb ending to our little drama.'"

"You're crazy," Bronson insisted.

"You can trust me!" Malone almost screamed. "Godammit, boss, I didn't dream this up. She just shook her head and agreed to everything he said. I tell you, the girl's gone crazy."

"No," Bronson said, "she wouldn't pull a trick like that on me. When I introduce her tonight, I'll stand in the middle of that spotlight deliberately. If Giraud plans to murder me, I'll take that chance. If Yvonne is on his side, then—I guess it won't make much difference."

"You'll be dead, that's all," Malone said. "And, boss, there's a lot of us who wouldn't want to be getting along without you."

"Look, Noisy, you've been around me for a long time. I don't hide out when the going gets tough, do I?"

Malone shook his head.

"And knowing how much I love Yvonne, do you think I'd give a damn what happened to me if she pulled a double-cross?"

"But I tell you she's . . ."

"I know," Bronson interrupted quietly. "She seems to think that by sticking with Giraud she can escape the spell that has been cast over her. I don't know if I can condemn her for that. If I were in her position I might do the same thing."

"You're trying to smooth things out for her," Malone insisted. "Giraud will wait until you are focused in that light. Then he'll take a pot shot at you from the dark and it will be all over. You act as though I'm to blame for telling you."

Malone stood up and started toward the door. Bronson took hold of his shoulder, turned him around and clasped his hand.

"You're okay, Noisy," he said. "Remember, I'm playing this my way. I have to trust Yvonne, or give up the fun of living. It sounds pretty dramatic, but that's the way I feel."

"I guess I know how you feel," Malone muttered, "but, if things look too bad, for God's sake don't get yourself shot, boss."

"I'll try not to," Bronson said.

HE LOOKED at his watch. Five to eight. At eight o'clock Yvonne would leave her dressing room, clad in the long crimson robe of Madame Satan. Bronson left the office, switching the light off as he went out.

The patrons of the Silver Terrace had learned to expect Madame Satan's slim, vibrant presence in the glow of soft lights. They had returned week after week to listen to the gentleness of her voice and to admire the haunting loveliness of her features.

Bronson, always present in his own shows, introduced each personality with the grace that made him and his club famous. Bronson had grown increasingly nervous as the hour approached. He had eaten alone in his office and stayed away from Yvonne Colbert until time for her appearance on the stage.

Malone, Bronson knew, had told the truth. At least, the truth as he had heard and seen it. There was little chance that Noisy was wrong, and yet the fact that he might be mistaken was the only hope Bronson could cling to.

The orchestra downstairs was playing the soft strains of *Stardust*. He walked along the hall and saw the flashing red of Yvonne's robe on the stairs ahead.

"Good evening." He took her arm and they went down the steps. "Don't worry. I think this thing is some joke Giraud has been playing. It's inconceivable that he could have the power to go through with it."

She didn't answer, but her grip on his arm tightened.

"I'm proud of you," he said, and turned her around before him under the light at the bottom of the stairs. "You've been a wonderful success."

Her eyes, turned up to his, were moist and warm.

"There's no use pretending, Rad; this will be my last night with you."

It was the first time she had called him Rad. Bronson caught his breath.

"I think you know I don't care much about going on, if—anything should happen to you," he said. "But we can't worry like this. It's a crazy farce. The days of black magic are over, thank God."

Yvonne said nothing. They both knew what lay ahead. They faced it and walked to the stage together.

MALONE had spotted Philip Giraud. He was taking no chances with fate. If Giraud was armed, he intended to take care of that detail with the same poison. He watched the Frenchman come in at seven-thirty and take a table near the stage. The lights were dim and Malone was sure the man had not seen him. His fingers closed over the solid grip of the .32 in his coat pocket.

The orchestra lingered over the last strains of *Stardust*, the lights faded entirely and the dining-room was hushed, awaiting the arrival of Madame Satan.

Malone crouched forward over his table, eyes focused on the dark form of Philip Giraud. He saw Giraud reach into his pocket and was sure, as the white spotlight flashed on, that

metal glinted in the Frenchman's hand. Malone drew his own gun and waited.

Bronson and Yvonne Colbert stepped into the circle of light. A round of applause arose from the audience. Malone could hear Bronson's voice.

"There is no need for an introduction. . . ."

Malone could see Giraud quite clearly now. The gun was hidden in the folds of the Frenchman's napkin. Yvonne stayed close to Bronson's side. Her eyes focused toward the darkness before her. Malone stood up and moved softly toward Giraud's table. He was suddenly frightened, remembering that Yvonne could see well in the dark. There would be some signal soon.

Bronson's voice went on calmly.

"Personal pride forces me to accompany Madame Satan to the stage tonight. You all know my reputation for accepting nothing but the finest here at the Silver Terrace. I can honestly say that I have taken the finest for my personal life as well. Madame Satan, or as I know her, Yvonne Colbert, has consented to become my wife . . ."

Malone was close to Giraud's table. A low curse escaped the Frenchman's lips. His pistol whipped upward quickly and aimed at the circle of light in which Bronson and Yvonne stood.

Malone sprang at Giraud. He misjudged by a second.

Crack!

A cry of pain came from the stage. At the same time, Malone's gun slammed down on Philip Giraud's skull. The Frenchman slouched forward against the table, his head streaming blood from the force of the blow. A gurgle escaped his lips as he slipped from the table and sprawled on the floor.

Malone stared at the stage in utter

disbelief. Yvonne Colbert was on her knees, both hands grasping her side. Blood ran down the folds of her gown. Bronson staggered from the darkness and picked her up quickly.

It was clear enough to Malone now. Yvonne had seen Giraud in the darkness and had expected the shot. She had pushed Bronson to one side and received the bullet that was meant for him.

At Malone's side, there was a sudden brilliant flash of light, as though a dozen flash bulbs had gone off simultaneously. Then the lights came on and the orchestra started playing again.

Malone knew he would have to move Giraud's body before it was seen. He leaned forward, eyes bulging.

Philip Giraud was gone!

At Malone's feet, where the Frenchman had fallen, the carpet was burned and blackened as though fire had licked across its surface. Malone backed slowly away from the spot, saw several couples staring at him with open mouths and realized he still held the .32 in his hand. He turned and ran backstage as though Satan were after him and not Philip Giraud.

MALONE found Rad Bronson and Yvonne in the first-aid room backstage. The girl's side was carefully bandaged and her cape was gone.

The ugly horns that had grown from her skull were no more. Her back was as smooth and perfect as ivory.

Malone stood in the door, the .32 hanging in his limp fingers.

Bronson turned, complete happiness dominating his face. Yvonne smiled warmly at him from the cot. She held her hand out to Malone and he went to her as though hypnotized. Her fingers closed over his.

"You see, by some miracle, I am normal again."

Malone felt choked up inside.

"I thought you double-crossed Rad. I saw you push him out of the way and take that bullet yourself."

Rad Bronson sat down on the edge of the girl's cot. He kissed her softly on the forehead and then looked up at Malone.

"Satan may be strong," he said. "But Yvonne proved herself worthy tonight of a better fate. It looks as though Giraud's black magic wasn't so powerful after all."

Malone remembered the blinding flash of light that played over Giraud's body. The burned carpet. The man-

ner in which Giraud disappeared. He smiled a slow, understanding smile.

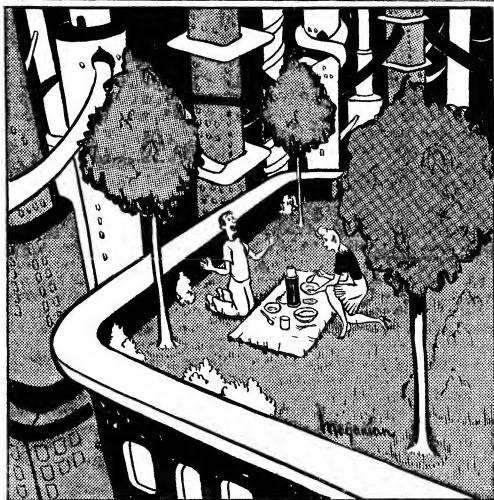
"He's gone where he won't do any more harm," he said.

Malone thought:

If Philip Giraud failed to send the girl to Satan, then Giraud himself would have to take her place.

Satan must have figured that Philip Giraud, having slain the girl slated for a place in Hell, must take her place.

Malone went downstairs alone, circled the burned spot on the carpet and sat down once more at his table. He was sure that he could detect the pungent odor of brimstone in the air.



"This is the life. Back to nature!"

FANTASTIC SEA JOURNEY

(Concluded from page 135)

the surface of the sea where the light is the strongest. It is a fact that water has the strong tendency to cut out light. As a result of this, it gets too dark for plant life to produce their food when we reach a level of about 100 metres below the surface of the sea. Actually, we find most of the plants in the first 50 metres and from then on the number found decreases greatly, so that at about 200 metres we find only trace of dead plants.

In the sea most of the food comes from above. Each animal in the sea generally occupies his particular level and can in many cases live out his natural life without trespassing another territory. How does he get the precious food? It is showered upon him from above. After all it is obvious that the plants and animals that inhabit the upper levels of the sea must die; nothing lives forever. Also, in water all that dies must sink. And so we find a steady shower of death from higher to lower levels. Let us attempt to follow this food chain. The only sensible way to start is from the top and work our way down the floor levels, much in the same sense as an elevator journey. Much of the food is eaten at the top by the hungry larva of many of the sea animals. They seem to possess the instinctive habits to come to the top and gorge their young growing bodies with the energy storing food that is vital to them at their stage of development. Much of the food, however, is not eaten and dies, also as a dead body does not float it inevitably sinks to the next lower level of the sea. Here it may be eaten by the fish who specialize at that level—generally a great number of current-feeding organisms that seem to have adopted a process of creating a current and catching the small life that is brought in by this current.

As H. G. Wells points out, both the quality and the quantity of food material becomes changed as we progress from level to level. Certain levels will eat more of a particular type of food and less of another type. This would tend to change the composition of the rain of food. In general we would find that the further down one goes the thinner the food rain becomes—also the greater the food particles become, since a heavy food particle falls faster and hence has a better chance to get past the hungry mouths of the fish above.

Water has the tendency to absorb the light waves from the sun. However, it has long been known that sunlight is composed of an assortment of colors. An excellent example is seen in the case of the rainbow. Water does not absorb all

the components of light at an equal rate. The first rays of light to be absorbed are the red rays—soon after 100 metres. The green can get through water for a much greater distance—perhaps to 450 metres or so. The most penetrating waves are those of shorter wave-length, the violet. These rays can penetrate a greater depth than 1,000 metres.

Could a deep sea diver distinguish a red object in its true color at a distance of, say, 110 metres? To answer this question we would first need to inquire as to why an object appears red at all. It seems that a red object has the power to absorb all the various rays of light except the red rays which is reflected back so that they can strike the color sensitive portion of the retina. Knowing this, we must come to the conclusion that it would be impossible to see red at any level below 100 metres.

Why? Simply because there are no red rays to reflect at 100 metres depth, since they were absorbed by the water before they could reach that level. Many of the deep sea fishes are colored red and therefore appear so black that they are hard to detect in the darkness of their environment.

The deep sea animals are also famous for their phosphorescence. Some are phosphorescent all over and others in strategic locations. Phosphorescence is used by many fish to lure an unsuspecting victim into a trap. One of the most interesting food catching set-ups is exhibited by a deep sea animal named *Lasiognathus*. This animal has developed a fishing rod and also provided his fishing rod with a luminous lure. The phosphorescent glow attracts the smaller fish and then the fishing rod, hook and all, is cast. It is a strange story indeed to believe, nevertheless it is true and further tends to bring out the age old adage of fact being stranger than fiction. If you are still skeptical as to the utter fantastic quality of truth, maybe a little more of the following will convince you. It is of course not a strange sight to see or meet a person carrying a flashlight. What about a crab? Yes, there is actually a form of hermit-crab found in the Indian Ocean that carries a living flashlight with him. If you could find the hermit crab in his deep sea home, you would in most cases find a sea-anemone perched upon his shell. The anemone remains atop the shell and serves as a source of light, illuminating the crab when he journeys about in search for food. The anemone's wage is a few food crumbs and in addition to lighting the hermit-crab's path, acts as his body-guard. The sea-anemone has many serrated batteries of stinging cells. When the hermit-crab is attacked, the anemone can shoot out through the holes in its body thousands of poisonous needles which are capable of paralyzing and destroying the enemy.

SPAWN OF THE GLACIER

By LEROY YERXA

**From the heart of an age-old glacier
came strange seeds that rattled. And
from the seeds came a real threat to Earth.**

THE single smoke-blackened room of the igloo was warm and held the stench of unwashed bodies, rotten fish and sweating dogs. The odors mingled until Art McFarland wanted to forget that hospitality demanded certain inconveniences. He longed to escape through the tunnel into the cold air outside.

But that wouldn't do. He was here at the invitation of Karau, who was a chief of no mean standing. McFarland curbed his natural impulses and continued to stare with a set grin at the fat, fur-covered Eskimo who crouched opposite him. Karau's smile was expansive. The big white teeth that were so much in evidence at this moment gave him the appearance of some toothy animal about to pounce on and devour its prey.

Karau was in doubt as to just what he might suggest in the manner of entertainment for this *kabloona** Karau's wife was snoring loudly in her sleeping

bag. The two men munched seal and fish meat together and Karau's ideas for entertainment were nearly exhausted.

Then an all-consuming grin lighted his face. Seeing it, McFarland suffered anew that urge to plunge outside and escape whatever might be coming. He had a horrible feeling that Karau might bring in a dog and tear it apart limb from limb in those huge, grist-mill teeth.

MacFarland like story of coming life? Like fortune?"

Karau didn't wait for a reply. He stood up and shuffled across the igloo to crouch again before a blackened chest. In this chest he kept his entire fortune. He carefully removed a rusty frying pan, a sock with a large hole in the toe, several empty tin-cans, and at last, to his evident satisfaction, a battered tea-kettle. He replaced each item with loving care, save for the teakettle, and ambled back to his original squatting-place. The tea-kettle lacked both handle and spigot. As he flourished it, the kettle rattled as though filled with stones.

* Eskimo for "white man."—Ed.



The boy struggled frantically; but the green man's hold only tightened

Karau placed the kettle on the floor in front of him, leaned close to McFarland and spoke in a loud whisper.

"Karau secret medicine man—wise man of tribe. Karau will tell you what is in your future."

McFarland sighed with relief. Karau had a bad case of halitosis, but even that was preferable to any of the more terrible things that might have happened.

"I guess McFarland can stand it," he said with a grin. "Probably I have a better future than I had a year ago."

He could see no advantage in telling this overfed Eskimo that a year ago doctors had given him up as a helpless wreck. He had been forced to leave the research laboratory of Plastics Inc., and come North for a rest.

"Frobisher Bay is a lonely place when we're frozen in," his old friend Ed Fisher had written the previous summer. "But the trading post is here, and I'm here. I'll guarantee you'll get a complete rest, and I *do* mean rest. You'll see nothing but natives and snow for six months. Wire me if you plan to come."

McFarland, for reasons that were a mystery to him now, had wired. That was last fall. In a week the first boat would come through from Canada. He'd go back to Plastics Inc. if they still wanted him.

He wondered what J. Manning Clark and his daughter, Sylvia, were doing at the moment. J. Manning Clark owned half of Plastics Inc. What about Sylvia? Probably running around with some one else by now.

"McFarland will watch close?"

HIS attention snapped back to Karau. The self-termed medicine-man of Frobisher Bay was on his hands and knees. In his right hand, still greasy with remains of a half-rotted salmon, Karau was shaking a handful of small, round pellets. McFarland's

thoughts slipped a cog, back to the last time he had thrown a pair of six's with the dotted bones. He watched the huge, hairy paw as it moved in rhythm and released the pellets. They rolled across the icy floor. Karau was crawling on all fours, his eyes shining. The pellets, each perhaps an inch in diameter, fanned out into a rough circle. McFarland watched with dreamy eyes. Only half his mind was on Karau as the dark man traced a thick finger from one pellet to another, marking an erratic trail on the dirty ice.

Karau scooped the pellets up and carefully dropped them back into the broken tea-kettle.

He studied the design for some time, then stared up at McFarland, apparently hoping his mumbo-jumbo had provoked interest. The American smiled.

"I suppose I *have* a future?"

Karau shook his head brightly.

"Big future." His eyes sparkled. "You catch ship soon and sail away?"

It was a question. Karau knew that he had said something that could not be denied. "You be glad to get back to white man country. You tell white men in big city you have friend in North name Karau. Very powerful friend—medicine man."

McFarland nodded, waiting for Karau to go on. He was gradually being overcome by the smell of the seal-oil lamp. His eyes moved slowly from side to side as the tiny curl of smoke arose from the flame.

Karau looked disappointed.

"That your fortune," he said, with a touch of resentment in his voice. What had the kabloona expected?

"Oh!" McFarland forced a polite smile. "Oh, yes! I should have known. Say, that's a pretty nice fortune, Karau. Darned if you aren't good."

Karau grinned happily.

"I hear whisper of voices in magic

balls," he said proudly. Karau only man in tribe who has them. Find in glacier very long distance away."

McFarland's interest suddenly grew. The fortune was about what he had expected from the slow-witted Karau. But the pellets, the small, round objects that Karau had tossed from the tea-kettle?

He leaned forward.

"Let's take a look at those things?"

A cunning look came into Karau's eyes.

"Powerful medicine," he said in a confidential whisper. "Be careful."

He pawed gently into the kettle and brought out a dozen of the pellets. He placed them carefully in McFarland's outstretched palm.

The sandy-haired man held them carefully. They were spheroids, having a slightly flat surface on opposite sides. They reminded him of clay marbles, being about that size and color.

"Hold to ear and here whisper of magic." Karau was proud of his magic pellets. He wanted to show them off to their full advantage.

MCFARLAND held them to his ear.

The motion of his hand made them rattle faintly as though they were filled with hard seeds. In spite of the urge to escape more of Karau's hospitality, McFarland was intrigued by these mysterious spheroids. They weren't like anything he had ever seen before. They reminded him somehow of seeds. Seeds that had dried and hardened to a rock-like composition. On the spur of the moment he held them toward Karau and opened his fingers.

"How much?"

Karau was pleased. A crafty look came into his eyes. If the kabloona wanted these worthless balls, then the kabloona must think they were real magic. Karau had kept them because

they brought him power in the tribe. The kabloona was ignorant to think that they really held magic power. Karau's understanding of the white man was limited. He was McFarland's best friend until trade articles were produced. Then Karau became shrewd and grasping. Perhaps, is he could argue well, McFarland would part with that sharp hunting-knife?

Karau shook his head violently.

"Powerful magic. Cannot sell."

McFarland knew his man. He hadn't worked at the post throughout the winter months without learning that lesson.

"Perhaps could trade?" Karau asked hopefully.

"No good," McFarland said with a smile. "They aren't worth much."

Karau was frightened. He wanted that knife. Wanted it more now than anything in the world. It was a fine knife and his eyes strayed to it and stayed there.

"Powerful magic," he repeated stubbornly. "Mighty fine magic."

McFarland had lost. With the look of one who had fought a battle and been beaten, he unbuckled his belt and slipped the knife and sheath from it. He held it before him.

"Knife—for all the magic balls?" he asked, and his lips were set in a determined line. Karau didn't hesitate. To hesitate now might lose him a wonderful knife. He emptied the tea-kettle in front of the white man.

Then grasping the knife, he drew it from the sheath and started to mumble delightedly over it.

McFarland stood up awkwardly. He had two handfuls of little brown marbles. Marbles that Karau had dug out of the ice on some forgotten glacier. Marbles that were hollow like seeds, and rattled.

"You're a hell of a trader," he

thought, as he thanked Karau properly for a pleasant evening, and crawled out into the snow.

THE sun was rising slowly. The snow near the store was slushy and black with a winter's accumulated filth.

McFarland stood for a time, staring into the south. He hoped that damned boat would get through and that Sylvia Clark would still have an occasional evening for him when he got back to Chicago.

A winter here would kill or cure a man. McFarland knew from the way his lungs responded to deep breaths of icy air, that he was cured.

Inside the trading post, he felt his way through the store and into the room at the rear. Fisher was snoring in complete comfort. McFarland slipped his purchase of rattling marbles into his duffle-bag and made a mental note not to tell Ed that he had fallen for an Eskimo's sucker game. He undressed, stretched his smooth, muscular body across the bunk and groaned in relaxation. With heavy blankets about his chin, McFarland went to sleep.

He dreamed that he had made a necklace of the rattling marbles and was placing it tenderly around Sylvia Clark's white throat. The marbles started to rattle and Sylvia screamed in terror. She kept insisting that the necklace was strangling her, and McFarland laughed.

"They're just full of teeth," he said, in the dream. Karau's teeth. He keeps them there so he won't get them dirty. Karau's got the biggest teeth in the world."

CHAPTER II

There Is Little Hope

RUDOLPH HALL thought Sylvia Clark the most stunning creature

he had ever seen, and Hall was a splendid judge of beauty. Sylvia Clark was tall, just to the point of being willowy. Her hair had that fresh, vibrant color of newly woven yellow silk. Her tanned shoulders and bronzed face indicated that she had spent hours exposed to the sun. Now, in the dim light of J. Manning Clark's big study, her lips drooped a trifle with exhaustion. Her long lashed eyelids covered half of the deep blue of her eyes.

Rudolph Hall saw that the girl was blushing uncomfortably under his steady scrutiny, so he turned his attention reluctantly to his ex-wife, another object of beauty who sat near the fireplace.

Howard Steele, bald-headed and resigned, sat under his wife's wing near J. Manning Clark's desk. Their son, Jimmy, sat on the desk, legs dangling, eyes heavy with drowsiness. Jimmy, age ten and as bright as a child should be, was a normal boy. But it was Rudolph Hall's opinion that little boys in general should be held in a world apart from grownups. Preferably a world of iron bars and razor straps. Rudolph Hall hated little boys.

Charlotte Grande, his ex-wife, was the principal target for Rudolph Hall's hatred. The reason was simple. Until today, Charlotte Grande had been Charlotte Hall, wife of Rudolph. Their divorce was final but their arguments were everlasting.

Hall completed his little visual trip from person to person, stared at Sylvia again until he was sure that she objected, then listened in on the conversation that five minutes before he had chosen to ignore.

Hall himself was of the smooth-haired, greasy-skinned type, generally classified as doubtful on any girl's matrimonial list. Still, there was that quality of polish that assured him of

a steady position as Plastics, Inc. South American representative. The polish helped, but the deciding factor was his ability to speak Spanish fluently.

"But I *still* say there is no immediate cause for worry over J. Manning," Freida Steele was saying. Freida Steele never saw cause for worry over anything but her stomach and the personal fortune in the Steele strong-box. "After *all*, he's a full grown *man*. He knows the Matto Grosso country better than *any* of us."

Freida had never been out of Chicago.

Hall smiled slightly and his upper lip curled. From the corner of his eyes he saw that Sylvia Clark, J. Manning's daughter, had heard enough of the inane conversation. He stood up abruptly.

"Isn't it about time we stopped discussing the possibility that J. Manning may be in trouble?" He noticed that Sylvia flashed a grateful smile in his direction. "J. Manning Clark is president of Plastics, Inc. If he says the fibres found in the Matto Grosso section are suitable for our purpose, he knows what he's talking about. He's also old enough to take care of himself down there. I predict that we'll hear from him in a few days."

A nice speech, he thought. The others stared at him with a begrudging respect. Steele and his little family depended on J. Manning. Sylvia was naturally worried about her father. Charlotte, damn her, was interested in anything or anyone who would continue dishing out money for her support.

Charlotte thought it time to offer an opinion. "Just the same, I'll feel safer when *Art* gets back."

HALL felt the hair on the back of his neck bristle. He shot a quick glance at Sylvia. She was smiling soft-

ly. The smile disappeared almost at once. Hall wasn't sure of Charlotte. He had expected his ex-wife would pull out of the Plastic setup for parts unknown. Her friendship with Sylvia had presented ample ground for her presence here this evening. J. Manning's home was always more or less open house, for that matter. Now Hall wasn't so sure of himself.

So the little devil was anxious for Art McFarland to return. Was that the way the wind blew?

Hall stared at Charlotte a little dreamily. She had the chassis, the pouting lips and the heavy blue-black hair that hooked men neatly and securely.

"I, for one, am going to head for home." Hall tried to sound sleepy, disinterested. "I need sleep and I think our charming hostess does, also."

"Oh, no!" Sylvia sprang to her feet. "You musn't hurry."

Her voice, tired and with no ring of sincerity in it, prompted them all to rise. Jimmy Steele climbed off the desk.

"Ain't we gonna go look for Mr. Clark, Dad?"

Jimmy didn't seem to realize that J. Manning Clark was lost somewhere a thousand miles from civilization in the jungle country of Brazil. To Jimmy, the Matto Grosso was a romantic, meaningless name that you found in a book of maps. Jimmy had a yen for adventure.

Mrs. Steele thought an apology was due for Jimmy's ignorance. She offered it in a loud voice while Howard Steele and Rudolph Hall went for the coats.

"Jimmy's *so* smart for a boy of his age." She stopped to catch her breath and to push her voice to a higher level. "I *do* hope that J. Manning is safe."

"Aw, Mom!" Jimmy tried desperately to get her attention. "Cut out the gushing. You know what Pa says?"

Charlotte Grande saved the situation by swaying across the room with a nice movement of her lips, placing a finger under Jimmy's chin, and planting a lush kiss on his mouth.

"Nice boys should be seen and not heard—much," she said in a tinkling voice. "There's a kiss for you, Jimmy. Some men don't appreciate my kisses."

Jimmy wiped the heavy application of lipstick away with a motion of disgust and turned away, while Rudolph Hall felt himself reddened under the fiery look his ex-wife was flashing at him.

Through the whole performance, Howard Steele and Sylvia Clark had remained in a world apart. A little worried, bewildered world that they shared together. Somehow the group found its way to the door. Howard Steele remained behind, as his wife swept Jimmy outside. He twisted his derby in nervous fingers and tried to find the correct words.

"J. M. and I are in this together," he said at last. "Now, Sylvia, I'm in touch with the Brazilian government. Your Dad was safe and well only last week. I am expecting another wire any minute, saying that he's reached the coast and is on his way home."

For the first time, the girl seemed on the verge of tears.

"But," she protested, "that wire. It said that the natives had returned alone. That Dad had wandered a way and couldn't be found."

She started to cry softly, grasping the little man's arm. Howard Steele was deeply touched. He made a gesture to move away, then hesitated. His eyes lighted in a desperate attempt at a smile.

"Why," he said, as though the idea had just occurred to him, "there might even be a wire waiting for me at home this minute. I must hurry . . ."

"Howard . . .!"

His wife's voice, clear and demand-

ing, came from the darkness beyond the porch. "Please hurry. Jimmy will catch cold."

She might as well have said: "That girl is too pretty for you to be left alone with."

Sylvia heard Jimmy's voice.

"Oh, Mom, I ain't gonna catch nothing."

Then they were gone, all of them, and Sylvia Clark stood swaying in the open door. She wondered if, of that entire group of people, all dependent on her father for an income, Howard Steele was her only true friend.

CHAPTER III

Man or Mouse?

ART MCFARLAND had never been as happy as he was this morning. He had purposely kept his return a secret until now. The trip from Newfoundland had been swift, and his first glimpse of home was a real thrill. The plane trip to Chicago brought back a wealth of old memories, and the family mansion in Evanston had never seemed so big and comfortable before.

McFarland was an orphan and a bachelor. His father, a chemist, had died when the boy was twenty. His mother, a warm-hearted, quiet woman of fifty, followed her husband after a year of grieving. That seemed like a long time ago. McFarland had celebrated his thirtieth birthday at the trading post on Frobisher Bay.

He added ice to a half glass of ginger ale, poured in a jigger of *Old Taylor* and stirred the mixture slowly. With the glass in his hand, he walked into the den, sat down near the guncase and stared dreamily out the window overlooking Lake Michigan.

Unable to enjoy the drink before he called Sylvia Clark, he went to the

phone and dialed the Clark home.

"Oh! Art, I'm so glad," Sylvia gasped, when he had identified himself, "we hadn't expected you back so soon."

"Listen," McFarland said eagerly, after they had chatted for a few moments. "Round up the J. Manning Clark pensioners and come over this evening. We'll celebrate the return of the wandering Zombie."

"Art!" She sounded worried. "You—aren't sick now? The trip cured you?"

He chuckled.

"My heart has picked up speed until I've got *too* much blood. You should see me. I'm so tough I can eat an Eskimo raw."

Sylvia was worried about something. Some of the happiness was missing from her laughter.

"Art?"

"Uhuh? What's up?"

"It's Dad. He went down to the Matto Grosso a month ago. The natives took him into the back country looking for a new fibre he thinks the company can use. The natives returned and told a wild story about Dad being dead—killed by wild animals. That's all we can learn."

She broke off, and he realized she was trying hard not to cry.

"Don't you worry about J. M., kid," he said trying to make his words sound convincing. "He can take care of himself. We'll talk it all over, tonight. Maybe I'd better go down myself."

"Art! Would you?"

She sounded relieved.

"We'll worry it out, tonight," he said. "Okay?"

It was. He hung up and returned to the den.

Freida Steele did everything but kiss McFarland, and Jimmy stood nearby, holding his father's hand and scowling at his mother.

"And we're *so* glad you've come back. It's *so* nice to have a *man* here when we're in trouble. You do look so devastatingly strong and healthy, Art."

McFarland managed to evade a continuation of the welcoming speech, shook hands warmly with Steele, and held Jimmy at arm's length for a complete examination. Jimmy wriggled a little but looked very proud. He had a lot of admiration for Art McFarland. Art could make any kind of a model airplane he wanted. Art could do darn near anything.

"Did you shoot any polar bears?" Jimmy demanded.

"I shot bears and seals," McFarland said. "And I've got a fish-spear in my trunk. It was carved out of whale-bone by a real Eskimo. I thought you'd like it."

"Hot dog!" Jimmy Steele's eyes were wide. "Where is it?"

"How silly!" his mother interposed. "Art, you *couldn't* give the child a *spear*."

Sylvia Clark came in, then, with Charlotte, Rudolph Hall between them. Charlotte studied Art McFarland with warm, mist-filled eyes. Hall stepped forward with outstretched arms. He managed a smile, but it didn't fool any of them.

"The hero returns," he said. McFarland took the hand. It reminded him of a frozen fish he had tried to eat in Karau's igloo and he let go of it quickly.

"Not quite a hero," he said, with an easy laugh, "but I do feel a lot stronger."

Sylvia was watching him from the background and it made McFarland nervous when Charlotte stepped toward him quickly, clasped his hands in her

THE Steele clan arrived first. There was that period of gushings in which

own and drew him close to her.

"Art," she said throatily, "Rudolph, the old villain, has just given me a divorce. I'm so glad you're home. I was on the verge of being all alone again."

McFarland wasn't surprised. He knew what Charlotte was after. But at this moment his eyes and thoughts were on the lovely girl framed in the dark doorway behind Charlotte. He had never dared to kiss Sylvia before. Perhaps the very fact that she was J. Manning's daughter had placed them worlds apart.

He broke away from Charlotte almost roughly and moved toward the door. The girl was waiting, her face tipped upward, arms at her sides.

"Sylvia—I've missed you. . . !"

He knew that the others were turning, watching.

"Hello, Art. It's good to see you again."

His arms swept around her and their lips met. A stray curl of soft yellow hair fell across her face and brushed against his nose.

She broke away, but he knew she wasn't entirely displeased.

"Art! Please!"

Her face was crimson. McFarland turned toward the others, linking Sylvia's fingers in his own. Freida Steele was staring at them, her lips parted with surprise. Charlotte's cheeks were burning red. There was a smile on Rudolph Hall's lips. A tight, sardonic smile. His chance would come later. For the moment, the look of hatred on Charlotte's face was enough to satisfy him.

Sylvia forced her fingers from McFarland's then, but he was sure that she returned the pressure slightly before she did so.

"I think that, after Mr. McFarland's impulsive gesture, I'd better replace some of my makeup."

She moved away rather hurriedly. After a moment of hesitation, Freida Steele took Charlotte's arm.

"If you intend to be *selfish* with your kisses, Art," she said coyly, "there's no reason why *we* should wait here."

Together, they followed Sylvia.

CHAPTER IV

The Marbles Rattle

ART MCFARLAND recognized in himself a strength he had not had before that trip north. His father had left a fortune and a huge estate to him. A wizard in research and in the development of new products, he had taken advantage of his father's name to make a lasting friendship with J. Manning Clark. Hence his work for the laboratories of Plastics Inc. McFarland had been drinking too much. His night life got the better of him. The trip to Frobisher Bay resulted.

Before that trip he hadn't been sure of anything. Now, with the touch of Sylvia's kiss still warm on his lips, he was sure, at least, that he was in love.

McFarland didn't like servants around. Now he prepared drinks and passed them to Steele and Hall. He poured a special glass of ginger-ale for Jimmy Steele.

McFarland wanted to know more about J. Manning's disappearance, but thus far no one had offered to bring up the subject. He realized that Hall didn't give a damn what happened to the boss, so long as the money continued to roll in. Howard Steele sat alone, answering questions politely, but refusing to mention J. Manning. McFarland knew that for some reason, Hall resented him. Probably because Charlotte had made a play for him when she came in. McFarland wasn't fooled by the divorce. There was jealousy in Hall's

eyes every time he looked at his ex-wife.

"I hadn't heard anything about you and Charlotte, Rudolph," he said casually.

Hall laughed nervously.

"You haven't heard about any of us since you went up there and loafed on a glacier for a year."

McFarland chuckled, but he knew there was something behind Hall's remark that wasn't pleasant. He sent Jimmy Steele for some more ice, pocketed an extra bottle opener and sat down comfortably in his favorite chair. He sipped at his drink slowly, studying Hall.

"I'd have thought you and Charlotte would have skipped town for a while. Don't you find it pretty tough going to the same places? Sort of hanging out the old sign 'business as usual'."

Hall's face turned a faint pink.

"Charlotte does what she wants to," he said with a trace of bitterness. "As for me, this is where I do my business."

McFarland thought of Sylvia Clark.

"That business wouldn't point toward Sylvia, would it? She needs someone with her father away."

Hall stood up abruptly, placing his glass on the table.

"That," he said, "is none of your damned business."

McFarland didn't move, but his fingers tightened around his glass.

"Your opinion," he said with a nod.

"Mine differs. I figured you out as a two-bit fortune hunter from the first day I met you. You thought Charlotte had dough and you married her for it. You're really in love with her now, at least to the extent that you burn up when anyone else gets within six feet of her. That divorce business was for a reason. Sylvia Clark has money and you stand ace-high with J. Manning. Do I make myself clear?"

A sneer twisted Hall's lips.

"So clear that you make yourself look like a jealous boy," he snarled. "Par-don me if I make your party slightly smaller by leaving."

He went toward the door swiftly, but there was a stiffness to the set of his shoulders that betrayed the brave front he had been showing. Hall had planned on a clear field, with McFarland out of the way. He didn't enjoy the present outlook.

"WHERE is Rudolph?" Freida Steele asked. The same question was mirrored on the faces of the other women. "Surely he didn't leave?"

Charlotte Grande giggled hysterically.

"The same old Art," she said walking toward McFarland swiftly. He didn't move as she sat down easily on the arm of his chair. "Rudolph is a fool, isn't he?"

McFarland didn't answer. He was looking into Sylvia's eyes. They were filled with cold, unexplainable anger.

Barely ten minutes ago the girl had returned his kiss with a tenderness that surprised him. Now, she was angry. He wondered if Rudolph Hall's sudden departure had something to do with her attitude.

"Hall had to leave," he said. "Does that break up the party? I've been waiting for someone to tell me about J. M. I don't believe he's in trouble. J. Manning just doesn't allow trouble to stop at the same hotel with him."

They all started talking at once. That is, all except Sylvia. She sat quietly and listened.

The strain had been great. Now that he had asked for it, every person in the room was leaning on him for support. Howard Steele told the story. He knew no more about it than McFarland already had heard. The Brazilian Consulate hadn't been able to get an intel-

ligent account of what had happened.

"I'm waiting for a full confirmation by letter," Steele said. "I'm afraid there's nothing we can do, at least for the present."

McFarland hesitated.

"Then why worry?" he said finally. "J. Manning would give us the devil if he knew we were crying over him. J. M.'s not a tenderfoot. Animals don't kill him. He kills them."

They all managed a smile at that and McFarland was quick to switch to some other line of thought.

"Jimmy!" Jimmy Steele's head jerked erect. He had been dozing. "Run upstairs and bring down a little box you'll find on my bed. I've got something to show you."

While the boy was gone, he told the story of the Eskimo, Karau, and the rattling marbles.

"Karau taught me how to tell a fortune with them," he said as Jimmy returned. "I'd like to try my skill."

He was using every trick he knew to entice Sylvia Clark into the circle. She was angry at him. Angry about something, probably Hall. To hell with Hall.

Jimmy put the box down carefully on McFarland's knee. Steele and his wife drew their chairs close. Jimmy stood at McFarland's elbow, Sylvia came over and stood stiffly behind Howard Steele.

McFARLAND took out a dozen of the little marbles. They felt slightly pliable in his hands. He shook them quickly, tossed them on the floor, and started a little white lie about Jimmy Steele and his future.

"The marbles say you're going to be a pilot, Jimmy," he said seriously. "I guess that one over there must mean that you're going to be so good you'll be away ahead of the rest of the pilots. That's why that one marble is alone."

They were all serious, and Sylvia

managed a little smile.

Jimmy looked awed.

"Did you learn all that up north, Art?"

McFarland picked up the marbles.

"Sure did," he said. "And now let's try your Pop."

Jimmy snorted.

"Pop ain't got no future," he said. "Pop's old."

Every one but Freida Steele laughed at that, and she gave Jimmy a lecture on respect for his parents.

One fortune-telling suggested another. Charlotte was going to find a new husband, a handsome one, to which she answered lightly:

"Art, I've always loved you."

McFarland didn't have the heart to throw the marbles again. He put them back into the box.

"Sorry I can't offer you anything to eat. Haven't found a cook yet."

"You don't need a cook," Jimmy said. "Why don't you marry Sylvia?"

"I wonder if Sylvia can cook," Charlotte asked with venom in her voice.

"I wonder if you can be nice long enough to eat at Cooley's Cupboard with us?" McFarland said abruptly. "I'm going to see that you are all well fed before I let you go home."

They all moved to the hall, and McFarland put the box of rattling-marbles on the open window sill.

It might have been Freida Steele's coat that knocked the box off. She put the coat on with a great show of gusto, sweeping close to the window as she did so. The box tipped over. The rattling-marbles rolled out and fell into the soft soil outside.

McFarland remembered the box a few days later. When, out of idle curiosity, he looked for the marbles, they were gone. The rain had driven them into the soft dirt.

They hadn't been much of a success

anyhow. He hadn't spoken to Sylvia Clark since the night of that unpleasant party.

Perhaps he should have paid more attention to the rattling-marbles. He wondered about that later, when it was too late.

CHAPTER V

The Plant Ripens

THE plants were tall and covered with long, almost transparent leaves. They grew, a dozen of them, among other varieties common to all gardens.

Hanging from the end of each stem was a small, dark ball. The balls looked like the rattling-marbles, but were much larger. In all, there were over fifty of the black balls, each of them approximately nine inches in diameter.

The seeds that started them had been spilled carelessly from a box on the window ledge. Seeds from a lonely Eskimo hut at Frobisher Bay, and before that, from the icy heart of a glacier.

It was close to midnight, the second week after Arthur McFarland had quarreled with Rudolph Hall.

A steady breeze blew off Lake Michigan, disturbing the hedge and rocking the little spheroids rhythmically. One of them finally dropped from its stem and settled slowly down to the earth. That was the signal for the awakening. As though by prearranged signal, the others also drifted downward to the ground.

A small door opened at the side of the first spheroid. Opened inward, leaving a mysterious cavity.

Then, more startling than anything that had happened thus far, a tiny man stepped over the open sill of the door and jumped to the earth. He was an old man, hardly more than five inches tall, clothed from head to foot in a

green robe. There wasn't an inch of him that *wasn't* green. Pale, dainty emerald feathers sprouted from his back and hung downward. He carried a staff that was taller than himself, holding it like a badge of authority.

For a time he stood alone, cut off from the world by the hedge that was a dozen times higher than himself, and by the house that must have been too vast for him to understand.

Then he turned toward the opened spheroid and motioned with his arm. This was the signal for the other doors to become suddenly filled with small, emerald bowmen, all falling over each other in their eagerness to reach open air. They looked as though each had been turned out of the same mold. Each was the size of his leader. However, their clothing was different. The first to alight had been old, almost monkish in appearance. These were husky warriors, dressed in green to match the texture of their flesh. Their clothing was skin tight. They wore pointed shoes, feathered hats, and carried bows that were as tall as themselves. A pair of transparent feathers sprouted from between the shoulder blades of each and hung down to the calf of his legs. The feathers resembled the leaves that grew on the strange plants above the heads of the little men.

In a twinkling, the warriors had formed in a tight group about the old man. Their language would have sounded high-pitched and very strange to anyone but themselves.

The old man held his staff aloft for silence. "What awesome world is this in which the plant men have come?"

HIS followers stared up at the house and, in the opposite direction, at the hopeless tangle of the hedge. They shook their heads.

"The leadership of the plant men

falls on my shoulders." The old man fluttered his wings slightly, as though very proud indeed of his splendid heritage. "It is so long since the last seeds have germinated that we have much to plan and accomplish. However, I am the only leader who came from the crop. I am complete master."

More nodding heads. The leader was announcing his policy. The plant men waited.

"It has evidently been many years since the *grave-of-ice*. Through some good fortune, we have come again to our country. One thing is fearful indeed. It would seem that a race of giants has come into power. We must proceed cautiously, learning as speedily as we can. When the seeds are ripe, they will be planted again. There is work to be done. Scouts must determine just how extensive the battle will be."

Among his followers, the leader was a powerful man. A man with a voice that demanded respect.

Without further instructions, a half dozen warriors leaped into the air, spread their wings and flew above the hedge. They looked like small birds, the moonlight reflecting in their green wings as they circled higher and higher into the air.

A huge square of light flashed out into the darkness from the side of the great cliff above the plant men. One of the scouts, more daring than the others, flew upward toward this light. He saw that it came from an opening in the wall of the cliff, and was produced by a transparent tube as large as himself that hung from the top of a square room behind the opening.

As there was nothing to alarm him for the present, the scout dropped gently onto the window-sill of Jimmy Steele's room and looked around with sparkling, green eyes. This was indeed

a great and fascinating place. He had never seen anything like the room. A huge, four-posted thing was in one corner. Lying across it, covered by a snowy white cloth, was a giant. At least the creature had the appearance of a giant, although his eyes and his expression were very gentle. The giant was studying a book. The scout remembered the books of law that the plant men had used years ago. This, however, was many times larger.

The scout was very excited by the discovery. He sprang away from the window and dropped gently back into the garden. He was the last to return. The others had gone only to the hedge top and had long since returned to report to the leader.

The scout was terribly keyed up over what he had found. He had trouble in making his voice sound official and disinterested.

"I have to report that we are born again in the midst of a land of giants. That I have seen one of them and he is much larger than we. Our battle to overcome him will be great."

The leader's splendid green face seemed to pale slightly, but he remained unshaken. This could not be true. No finer, taller men grew in all the world than his own ancestors.

"We shall see this for ourselves," he said. "Two of our *plastas** will enter the giant's dwelling. We must learn just how powerful the giant is."

CHAPTER VI

Jimmy Sees Fairies

JIMMY STEELE liked Robin Hood. He thought Robin Hood was about

**Plasta*—The spheroid balls in which these men were born. Each *plasta* held six men. These six plant men formed a permanent crew for their own *plasta*.—ED.

the nicest guy in history. Jimmy's mind never bothered to unscramble the rather questionable lives of men like Robin Hood and Paul Bunyan. They were as much alive to him as were Columbus and Buffalo Bill.

Robin Hood was a "right guy" and Jimmy Steele thought there was a lot of Robin Hood in Art McFarland. Of course, Art didn't carry a bow and arrows, but Art had brought a fish-spear all the way from the North Pole, almost, and that was just as good.

Jimmy believed in fairies all right. There wasn't any doubt about that. When he was reading Robin Hood in bed, and the fairies came floating through the open window in two little black balls, and stepped out on the table by his bed, his eyes might have grown a little round and excited, but he didn't become alarmed.

It was well that he didn't. Jimmy was flirting with death in the form of tiny arrows.

He was thrilled by the little group of perfect Robin Hoods that climbed out of the black balls, and stood stiff and alert, staring up at him. Jimmy knew Robin Hood didn't have wings, but fairies *always* did, so that made it even.

He couldn't help smiling at the wizzen-faced little old man who advanced stiffly across the table until he was close to Jimmy's face. Jimmy thought he looked like Friar Tuck, with green parrot feathers hanging down his back.

The little man held up his arm, and his fingers just reached the rim of the water glass on the table. The other fairies, all of them alike, drew little arrows from their quivers and placed them loosely in their bows. They stood in a determined group behind their leader.

Jimmy didn't know just how you got along with fairies.

"Hello," he said, and smiled at them

so they wouldn't run away.

They didn't, although afterward the leader admitted that it was a bad moment. He hadn't expected such a blast of sound. He put finger-tips to his ears and shook his head violently.

Jimmy caught the hint.

"Hello," he said again, this time almost in a whisper.

The leader bowed at the waist, evidently working on the theory that if worse came to worse, he could always get tough when it was necessary. He started to talk swiftly, asking questions that were nothing but a mass of question marks as far as Jimmy was concerned. The tiny, high-pitched voice meant nothing to him. He turned the water-glass over, picked up the little man with the staff and sat him down on top of the glass.

FORTUNATELY for Jimmy, he did it quickly, and the leader was safe again in a moment. Had that moment lasted long enough for him to cry out in fright, the bowmen would have released a flight of arrows.

As it was, the leader moved uneasily on top of the glass. From this point of vantage he could easily see the pages of Jimmy's book. He spent several minutes studying it.

While he was thus occupied, Jimmy lay very still, watching his guests.

"Can you read?" he asked the leader.

The leader didn't understand the words. He shook his head—first yes, then no. That would take care of everything.

The leader was very worried. He couldn't even reason with the giant. The words on the page were foreign to him. He had never seen such marks before. This created a problem. He spoke to his followers, keeping all the dignity that such a position would allow.

"The giant will not harm us for the

present. He is entertained. We must gain his friendship if possible. Throw down your bows."

And while Jimmy watched with interest, the leader studied the page of Robin Hood.

He finally decided that he could not read it, regardless of how he tried. He became angry. He and his men were intelligent. Before the death-of-ice swept them from earth, his plant men had been the ruling race. Now they were replaced by giants—but wait? Were these giants? The one on the bed seemed to have the mind of a child.

He must be a *child* giant.

The leader shivered. Imagine, then, the size and the power of the matured giants! Only one plan of action suggested itself to the leader.

He must work slowly. No point of reproducing the plant man race until he was ready for them. The little group would have to learn to determine what battles they were to fight. Then, equipped with information about these giants, they could reclaim what had been theirs before the death-of-ice came.

The little giant on the bed was friendly. He must, in some way, be sworn to secrecy. They would learn his language. It would be of great value.

The leader took a deep breath, fluttered to the table top, and ordered his warriors back into their *plastas*. This move would tell the boy-giant they were leaving. Then the leader approached the huge head that leaned over the table top.

The leader motioned toward the window with his arm. Then he smiled in a friendly manner. He made several motions toward the window and back, trying to tell the boy-giant that they would go, and come again. Jimmy got the idea. The fairies were going away but they would come back.

Then the old man held his finger to his pursed lips. It was a sign that no one could possibly misunderstand.

Jimmy shook his head delightedly.

He put his fingers to his own lips.

"I won't tell anyone," he promised. "Not anyone."

"Not anyone," the leader repeated in a thin voice. Already he could speak the language, although he didn't understand it.

He bowed once more, thinking it good manners, and moved toward the *plasta*. At the door, he turned once more and placed his finger to his lips. Jimmy repeated the process, and waved his hand.

"Goodbye," he said.

The leader smiled.

"Good bye." He made two words of it.

When he closed the door of the *plasta*, the leader was well satisfied. He had already learned the proper word to use when departing from the company of the giants. He repeated it over and over as the *plasta* floated from the window and sank down behind the hedge.

Jimmy Steele lay awake for a long time that night. Robin Hood was on the table, neglected and forgotten. Jimmy Steele had a date with some real fairies. That was better than Robin Hood and Buffalo Bill put together.

CHAPTER VII

Death Postponed

ART MCFARLAND wasn't satisfied with the setup, but he didn't know any other way of keeping Sylvia Clark busy while he was in Brazil. She needed company. The J. Manning Clark mansion on Lake Shore Drive was a lonely place. But McFarland couldn't ask the girl to stay alone at the Evanston place.

McFarland didn't especially like Charlotte Grande. The girl was after him, or any reasonable facsimile. Still, she was good company for Sylvia.

The two girls managed to get along well enough. Tennis, golf and a love for the outdoors gave them a common bond.

McFarland invited the entire group to the Evanston house for the summer. There was more room than he knew what to do with. Freida Steele was so pleased to get out of the cramped apartment on West Madison that she overrode any objection her husband might have. Jimmy, after his first meeting with the fairies, didn't think there was a house in the world as nice as Art's.

Sylvia decided to come, as long as there would be others about for company, and Art McFarland made plans to leave for the Matto Grosso as soon as his passports and transportation could be arranged.

Three weeks after he returned from Frobisher Bay, McFarland was ready to leave to search for J. Manning Clark.

IT WAS Friday evening. The others had arrived with their baggage. Quiet Howard Steele was last. He came in a cab, with odds and ends that Freida must *have* if life were to be at all *livable*. However, he came with news that changed Art McFarland's entire summer—perhaps his entire life.

Steele rang the front door bell excitedly and barged in before any of them could open the door for him. They were gathered in the hall, greeting Charlotte Grande and her ten pieces of luggage. When Charlotte moved, she went all out on the project.

Steele waved a sheet of paper that bore the unmistakable letterhead of the Brazilian Consulate.

"It's J. M." Steele's voice was hysterical with relief. "He wired Washing-

ton that he is safe. His business demands that no one contact him until he advises us.

Art McFarland took the letter and read aloud:

Dear Mr. Steele:

I promised to advise you as soon as I heard from your partner, J. Manning Clark. As Clark and I are also old friends, I am writing personally.

A wire reached me today. He refused to contact you direct for reasons that I cannot now divulge. However, I assure you that there is nothing to worry about. He has discovered certain materials that may revolutionize your business.

J. Manning Clark will contact you at the proper time. Meanwhile, accept my word that he is safe and that I will let you have further news.

Respectfully,
RAMANDO QUARTEZ,
Office of the Brazilian
Consul,
Washington, D. C.

McFARLAND passed the letter to Sylvia, who read it over to herself. There were tears of relief in her eyes. No one spoke for a full minute, then the room was filled with eager voices.

"He had no right to worry us so," Freida Steele protested.

"J. M. has a right to do what he damn well pleases," Charlotte Grande said softly. She went to the divan, lighted a cigarette and sat down carefully, making sure a proper amount of silk clad knee was visible to her public. McFarland sighed.

"Well, looks as though I stay home after all," he said. That's about the most welcome postponement I've ever made."

Sylvia folded the letter and passed it

back to Steele.

The little man was quite overcome by it all. He wiped an impatient hand across his eyes, and his fingers were shaking.

"I'm—I'm happy," he said. "For Sylvia's sake."

Sylvia smiled. The odd, half-fearful expression was gone. Her face had color once more.

For that matter, McFarland thought Sylvia was tops tonight in a number of ways. There was no comparison between Charlotte's tight fitting dress and the creation that Sylvia had been poured into. Her shoulders were tanned. The silken hair had been combed out to full length, and the pale-blue silk evening gown with a wide skirt that swept the floor, brought out every dimple and curve as though they had been carved from pure ivory.

Sylvia could look lovely without being aware of it. She did everything simply and without pretense. Now she was staring up at McFarland, eyes brimming.

"Thanks for wanting to help, Art. I suppose we can all go home now and let you rest."

He chuckled.

"I had to fight to get you here," he said. "You certainly wouldn't walk out, now, just because I'm staying at home! There's room for everyone. Let's make it a party until we hear from J. M. The old joint needs some life in it."

"You're so sweet!" Freida Steele had already made up her mind to stay.

Charlotte arose and swayed across the floor to Sylvia's side. She took her arm and, in a voice dripping with honey, said:

"Come on, Syl, let's get settled. I'm waiting to get a crack at you on those tennis courts."

"She's waiting to get a crack at her,

all right," McFarland thought grimly.

The evening might have ended in a dull game of bridge if Jimmy Steele hadn't gone to his room at that time. Jimmy had been staying with Art McFarland for two weeks. Tonight Jimmy had another date with the fairies.

Howard Steele was explaining that the Matto Grosso jungle had a lot of valuable timber and fiber hidden in its remote vastness. He was wondering aloud if J. M. had found a good substitute for wood-pulp plastic.

Charlotte had flashed her nicest smile at McFarland, and McFarland was mentally tearing Hall apart limb for limb because he couldn't beg a smile from Sylvia.

THE scream was full of fear and terrible pain. It was Jimmy's voice, rising to a high-pitched cry of terror.

Freida sprang to her feet.

"It's Jimmy!"

McFarland reached the hall and took the steps three at a time. He threw open the door at the end of the hall and saw Jimmy stretched out on the floor half-way between the door and the bed. The boy's face was cut and bleeding. His eyes were closed and as McFarland scooped him up in his arms, he felt Jimmy's body grow tense.

"Art, look out for the green fairies!"

He had to push his way through the others to get Jimmy downstairs and across the lounge to the divan. He sent Freida for water, to keep her quiet. They bathed Jimmy's forehead and washed the dozens of tiny wounds on his face.

When Jimmy opened his eyes, there were a lot of familiar faces close to his. His mother was crying and Art McFarland had a puzzled, angry expression on his face.

Jimmy didn't dare to tell that the green fairies had suddenly started

shooting arrows at him.

Art might believe him, but Jimmy didn't dare tell Art.

McFarland went outside, after that. He had a little thinking to do. Jimmy watched him as he left the room, and wondered just how much McFarland had guessed. Maybe if he were alone with Art, he'd dare to tell him. He'd *have* to tell someone, or the fairies might try to kill him again.

CHAPTER VIII

The Plant Men Strike

McFARLAND wandered across the moonlit lawn. He was puzzling over what had caused those scratches on Jimmy Steele's face. Jimmy wouldn't talk. That might mean that a favorite cat had crawled into Jimmy's bedroom and scratched him. Jimmy would be afraid that the cat might be punished.

That explanation didn't satisfy McFarland.

"Art, look out for the green fairies!"

There was a bizarre, almost frightening meaning in the boy's words. Jimmy had a healthy imagination, but Jimmy was almost out cold when he said that. McFarland's experience told him that people usually muttered truths when they were unable to control their lips.

He had come as far as the greenhouse, hesitated, then opened the door and went inside. The place was dark. He felt for the light-switch and snapped it on. He was surprised at what he saw.

Ben, the gardener, had been given a free hand. The place was about a hundred feet long, filled with tables of earth and flower pots. A fine collection of native plants and shrubs were in sight.

With Jimmy now occupying a very small place in his mind, McFarland

walked toward the plants, admiring Ben's handwork. He reached the first group of palms before he heard a tiny voice call out:

"Stay where you are!"

McFarland stopped in his tracks, staring around with amazement. At first he could see no one. The voice, coming from somewhere below him, sounded like the piping of a tiny flute. Then, on the edge of a small flower pot, he saw a little man, hardly five inches tall. The little green fellow brandished a staff in the air that was taller than his own body. He was completely green, both in clothing and skin, and emerald wings fluttered about his shoulders.

McFarland realized that he was staring at one of Jimmy Steele's fairies. He was too fascinated to move or speak.

"We have tried to avoid contact with your kind until we were fully prepared," the little man shouted. "Now that you have discovered us, we must act."

He turned and shouted a command into the foliage on the plant table.

"Destroy the giant! Release your arrows!"

Something hit McFarland in the neck. Swearing with pain, he reached up and drew out a small, dart-like arrow.

"Take it easy, will you?" he shouted. "You don't have to —"

Before he could protect himself, dozens of the darts buried themselves in his face and shoulders.

It wasn't funny, now. He looked for the little man who had shouted at him, but the leader was gone. Then, gradually, he could see the warriors who were shooting at him. They were like their leader, green in color, but dressed differently. They had scattered carefully among the plants, hiding behind the leaves.

McFarland felt as though he had walked straight into a hornet's nest.

He staggered back toward the door, protecting his eyes with his hands. He managed to find the light-switch and plunged the entire place into darkness.

The army of plant men stopped firing at once.

McFARLAND, shaking his head like an angry bull, plunged through the door and fell headlong into the shrubbery outside. His hair was disheveled and his shirt was torn almost from his shoulders.

He managed to get to his feet, and stagger toward the house. Blood had run down his face and he could hardly see. He fumbled with the door knob and stumbled into the kitchen.

There was a sudden movement of pale blue color near the refrigerator. Sylvia had come to the kitchen for ice.

She saw McFarland standing there, wiping blood from his face with the back of his hand.

"Art! What happened?"

She was at his side, helping him to a chair by the table.

"I'm all right," he said grimly. The barbs were stinging his face and shoulders.

"But what happened. Where in heaven's name . . .?"

"I went for a walk," he said. Then a chuckle escaped his lips. "Guess I met some of Jimmy's fairies."

CHAPTER IX

"You Are Conquered!"

SINCE the first night that the *plastas* of the plant men fell from the ripened vines, they had made great strides toward their conquest of the world. In every growth of plant men there was a leader. The little man with the extra fine feathers who had been born with the robe and staff of knowl-

edge, was the leader of the first growth.

His name was Thorna, and he had been properly chosen by his warriors. Thorna ruled well. He led his people in the right direction, preparing for war against the giants.

A select group of warriors had learned, with Thorna, the language of the child-giant. They thought they had filled the child-giant with arrows, leaving him to die. The child-giant would have no opportunity to tell others what had happened.

But first, Thorna had become familiar with the language spoken by the giants.

To him also went credit for finding the Temple of Glass. Thorna discovered the Temple of Glass and was wise enough to realize that the warm, damp air made his people grow larger and stronger.

If the giant had not stumbled into the Temple of Glass, Thorna would have not attacked the giant-race so soon. Now, there was no choice. He must follow up quickly and claim the giant as prisoner.

Thorna stood in stately dignity on top of the flower-pot where he had directed the battle. The giant was gone, and the light that startled them into hiding, was gone also. Thorna spoke.

"The giants, we have seen, are not fighters."

A mighty cheer followed that ringing declaration.

"We will multiply speedily. We will find in the new *plastas*, a group of sub-leaders who will learn from me each day. I think that we are now ready to follow up our first victory and claim the weakened giant as our rightful prisoner."

Another cheer.

"We will, in a few weeks, have a complete legion of warriors. At present a few dozen will suffice to bring back

the wounded enemy. May I have volunteers?"

Every plant man on the table stepped forward. Some of them, perched high among the plants, almost broke their necks getting down to the leader. Thorna held up his hand for silence.

"We will take fifteen *plastas* of men. The giant had retreated to his cliff. We will search for him there."

Secretly, Thorna was shaking in his boots. He had been frightened to death of the child-giant. He didn't want to tackle the giant's cliff alone, but he must, to keep his standing as leader.

Out of a broken glass near the end of the hot-house floated fifteen small *plastas*. They gained speed in the breeze, sailed upward toward the kitchen window and drifted silently through it. Thorna, in the first spheroid, guided it deftly to a huge round-topped landing field. Through the slitted eye piece of the *plasta* he saw something that took his breath away.

THE giant was here, but he was not alone. He was seated in a chair, bending over a huge table. Leaning close to him was a female giant, the most breath-taking person Thorna had ever seen. Even though her skin had none of the green pigment that was so attractive, Thorna recognized beauty when he saw it.

The girl-giant was plucking arrows from the giant's wounds. He sat patiently as she drew them out, and dabbed at the blood with a huge wad of white stuff.

The girl-giant had flesh of golden brown. Her body was moulded into the finest blue and white garment Thorna had ever seen.

Thorna stepped uncertainly from his *plasta*. His five personal warriors sprang out, taking positions behind him. To them, the giant's will was already

broken, and he was ready for the kill. Thorna did not fear the girl-giant. She would be weak.

The slight *click* of the *plastas*, as they hit the table startled Sylvia.

She turned around quickly, uttered a startled little cry and threw her arms about McFarland's neck. That was only for a moment. She drew away, blushing a little, still staring with wide, blue eyes and parted lips at the scene on the table.

This was the time to assert himself, Thorna thought. He stepped quickly to the edge of the table, raised both arms above his head and planted his feet solidly.

The last of the *plastas* had floated through the window, and a small body of bowmen were ready, bows strung.

Thorna's voice was very weak and thin, in spite of the bellow he attempted to send toward the pair of giants.

"You are a conquered people. We call upon you to surrender yourselves to us."

For a moment McFarland's face remained solemn. Then a smile curled his lips and he slapped his knee with his palm. A laugh shook his body.

"Well, I'll be blitzkrieged!" he howled. "Sylvia, did you hear that? Jimmy's fairies have conquered us!"

The girl said nothing. Her mind was in such a turmoil at that moment that she couldn't think clearly. The figures on the table were like living, green dolls.

McFarland leaned forward and picked up Thorna.

Thorna started to kick and shout as the big hand went around him. He managed to howl one command.

"Attack!"

A dozen arrows sped through the air toward the pair of giants. With an oath, McFarland dropped the leader to the table where the little feathered man flopped on his back, then managed to

regain his feet and rush for the *plasta*. As he ran, he shouted wildly:

"Retreat. They are too powerful. We shall be killed."

The arrows still flew. McFarland, afraid that one of them would do serious harm to the girl, whipped the table cloth from the table. He held it between them and the bowmen. The other hand swooped out and captured the *plasta* in which Thorna had taken refuge.

THE battle was over. The bowmen were helpless, now that the heavy curtain hung between them and the giants. They might have flown over it and inflicted punishment, but the loss of their leader left them with no heart to fight on. There was a sudden rush for the *plastas* and a mass retreat out the window. Five bowmen remained. In a small circle, back to back, they waited with drawn bows. They were the personal bowmen of Thorna, and to leave now would bring certain death to them from their own people.

The *plasta* was in McFarland's hand. He lowered the table-cloth slowly. Before him were the five tiny plant men, shaking in their green boots, waiting for the final swoop of that terrible hand that would mean death to them all.

McFarland pulled out a thorn that had penetrated his wrist and started to laugh.

"I think," he said, "that you'd better lock the kitchen door. We'd better stay alone until we convince ourselves that we're still sane."

Sylvia stood up and walked to the door as though she were in a dream. She slipped the bolt into place and returned. She stood by the table, staring down at the group of warriors.

"They're afraid of us, Art. The poor little darlings."

McFarland was busy. He managed

to pry open the door of the *plasta* which he still held in his hand. He reached in with two fingers and drew out Thorna. Thorna fought and kicked and scratched but it was useless. McFarland placed him gently on the table and the leader sank to his knees.

"We plead for mercy!" His tiny voice shook. "What would you do with the body of such as I. I am an old man and of no value."

Sylvia forgot the warriors for the moment.

"Art," her voice was pleading, "we aren't crazy, are we? This is really happening?"

He pointed to the plant man.

"He sure takes it seriously enough," he said.

Sylvia picked up Thorna. She placed him in the palm of her hand and stroked his wings.

"Don't be frightened," she said softly. "We won't harm you."

Thorna's heart did a flip-flop. So, after all, he was not such an old man. He had charmed the mighty giantess. He sank to his knees on the soft palm of her hand.

"I thank you, mighty giantess. And now, may we go?"

"No," McFarland said. Thorna started to shiver.

"We meant no harm to the white giant."

"You meant to kill me," McFarland reminded him, "and it's no fault of yours that you didn't. Why did you attack the boy?"

"Please, Art," Sylvia said. "Let the little fellow go."

McFarland felt his bleeding shoulder.

"Nothing doing! I can't let my guests wander around here and have these—these midget Robin Hoods bump them off. How does it sound? Arthur McFarland arrested for allowing fairy warriors to murder his guests!"

Sylvia laughed.

"A little silly," she said. "And remember, this little man said himself that you and I are a conquered people. Please, Art, I'll make him promise not to harm us."

McFarland winced.

"Okay," he said.

"You'll promise to be good?" he heard Sylvia ask.

He stood up and went to the door.

"I'm going to take a bath, and see if I can lose the sting of these cuts with a couple of highballs."

Sylvia hadn't heard him. She was placing the little man carefully in the little round ball. McFarland went into the hall, slamming the kitchen door behind him.

Sylvia Clark didn't realize, as she watched the last *plasta* float out the kitchen window, that she had opened negotiations for an enterprise greater than J. Manning Clark could ever have hoped to achieve. Nor did she know that the leader, Thorna, had gained the confidence of his people, and fallen madly in love with a woman giant.

Thorna's whole being was shaken by her beauty, and the mighty, tender voice. He couldn't blame the man-giant for being angry, but from now on the man-giant was safe. He could thank the lovely giantress in blue and white for that.

CHAPTER X

Death Cries Out

IT WAS an awe-stricken, frightened Thorna who crept silently from the Temple of Glass and flew alone above the hedge to the cliff. He saw the light that burned above him, flew upward quickly, and landed on the window-sill. This was not the giantess's room. Another giantess occupied it. She was

dark-skinned and attractive, stretched across her bed in a red robe.

Thorna stared with admiration at the new giantess, then slipped from the sill and flew along the cliff wall to the next lighted window. He flew inside, recognizing at once, the soft blue dress that lay across the chair near the bed.

The giantess was asleep. Her head was buried in a pillow. Long, golden hair curled in all directions over the white cloth. Thorna dropped softly to the pillow near her head. Sylvia Clark's eyes opened slightly, then widened. A smile moved her lips.

"Hello, little man," she said. "Am I dreaming again?"

Thorna sat down, cross-legged on the pillow.

"Would the giantess listen if Thorna asked her some important questions?"

He was very serious.

She nodded and the movement almost threw him from the pillow. He regained his balance.

"Where did you come from?" Sylvia asked.

"From the Palace of Glass," he said. Sylvia looked puzzled.

"That's a pretty name. Where is it?"

Thorna pointed out the window.

"Only a short way," he said. "It belongs, I think, to the giant we attacked."

Sylvia thought she understood. The little winged man must have come from Art's greenhouse.

"But I mean, where did you come from in the first place?"

Thorna had come to ask questions, not answer them, but if the giantess wanted to know about the plant men, he would be proud to tell her.

"It is a long story. You will tell no one?"

"No one."

"Once," Thorna said with a mournful

sigh, "we were the only people on earth. The animal kingdom did not trouble us. The world was hot and wet. We flourished, and were the ruling race. No more powerful warriors were there than the plant men. At last the death-of-ice came."

"The death-of-ice? I don't understand."

Thorna took a deep breath.

"The death-of-ice was a huge ice-sheet that moved over the land. It dug great valleys and made high mountains. It slowly buried our homes and our families."

Could he mean the glacial age, Sylvia wondered?

"Fortunately," Thorna went on, "we, the plant men, are reproduced by plants. The plant grows quickly, the *plastas* are formed and in each *plasta* there are six men."

His chest swelled slightly.

"I am the leader."

"But, if the death-of-ice destroyed you all, how . . .?"

"HOW are we here now? We know not. Some of the seeds of our civilization were scooped up and frozen by the death-of-ice. Somehow those seeds found their way to warm earth, and grew. They would not grow in a cold climate."

Sylvia Clark was beginning to understand. As wild as it might sound, she knew that Art McFarland's "rattling marbles" had produced these men. She remembered hearing McFarland say that they had fallen out the window, and were buried in the dirt.

"That's a very interesting story," she told Thorna.

Thorna glowed.

"And now—if I may ask the giantess a question—where did the giants like yourself come from?"

Sylvia smiled, picked him up, and

placed him closer to her ear.

"I'm not really big," she said. "All people on earth are as large as I."

She saw Thorna's face turn a very pale green. He shivered violently.

"All—as large as you?"

She nodded.

"Millions of us," she said. Of course, I suppose we seem *very* large to you."

Thorna gulped.

"Very large," he agreed. Then, anxiously, "But, before the death-of-ice came, we were as large as any one."

Sylvia chuckled.

"It must have been a small world," she said.

Thorna managed a doubtful smile.

"As leader of my people, I had planned to conquer all of you. I suppose it would be impossible?"

The question was very humble. Sylvia nodded her head.

"Any more questions?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"I thought perhaps our small size might be caused by the cold air. We seem to grow many inches taller in the warmth of the Palace of Glass. Are there warmer lands?"

"Yes," she said. "Many lands are warmer. My father is in a land now that grows tropical plants like those in your Palace of Glass. The heat there is almost too much for us to bear."

"And the moisture? It is a damp land?"

"Yes."

Thorna was eager.

"It is far away?"

"Farther than you could go in a long, long time, because of your size," Sylvia assured him.

Thorna was crestfallen.

"It isn't fair," he said. "Once we were all-powerful. Now you have taken our world and we are midgits. We do not deserve such a fate."

Sylvia was touched. The little men didn't really mean any harm.

"Do you think," she asked eagerly, "that if you were in a warm land, you would grow?"

He nodded his head fiercely. Then he frowned.

"But such dreams are impossible."

"I am not sure that they are. Could you survive if you all stayed in your *plastas* for many days?"

"Yes."

Sylvia was satisfied.

"Then it's all settled," she said. "Tomorrow I'm shipping a large package by air-express to the Matto Grosso. When you feel the warmth and moisture that you need, break out of the package, and you will be in the warm land."

Thorna did not know what she planned to do, nor did he fully understand the meaning of all the words she used, but he trusted the giantess.

"I don't know how to thank you."

"Never mind," she said. "Have your entire army in my room, tomorrow night. I'll take care of . . ."

"*Help!*"

A HIGH pitched scream of terror interrupted her in mid-sentence. It seemed to come from one of the rooms down the hall. Sylvia sprang from her bed.

She reached for her robe and turned to see Thorna still waiting on the pillow.

"You'd better go," she said. "Don't forget—tomorrow night."

As she opened her door, she realized who had cried out in the night. She ran down the hall and met Art McFarland coming from the opposite direction. Freida Steele was laboring up the stairs from the lounge, her heavy body wrapped in a pink house-coat. Jimmy, in his shorts, met his mother at the head of the stairs.

"A woman screamed, Mom. Was it Sylvia?"

"I'm sure I don't . . ."

McFarland threw open the door to Charlotte Grande's room. Sylvia, close behind him, started to scream, then clapped her hand tightly over her mouth. She turned in time to stop Jimmy Steele at the door.

"You'd better go back to your room, Jimmy," she said.

Freida saw Sylvia's expression and started to sob.

Sylvia slammed the door in her face. She turned toward the bed. McFarland released Charlotte's limp wrist and looked up at Sylvia, his eyes burning with rage.

"She's dead," he said. "We can thank those little green devils, and their darts."

"Oh!—no!"

Sylvia moved toward the bed slowly, hating to look, knowing that she must. Charlotte had been reading. The book was on the floor. The dark red robe was torn open. Her face and throat were covered with blood. Her eyes stared straight at the ceiling.

"It's going to be a hell of a case for the police," McFarland said bitterly. "We'll all go to jail if we start talking about green fairies."

CHAPTER XI

Murder by Express

EVENTS were piling up too swiftly to suit Art McFarland. During the short weeks since he had returned from Frobisher Bay, J. Manning Clark had been lost and then found in the jungles of the Matto Grosso. McFarland had been attacked and pronounced "conquered" by little men with bows and arrows. Now Charlotte Grande was dead.

McFarland wandered around the study, sipping a Tom Collins, and trying to make sense out of the situation. He wished he'd stayed at Frobisher Bay all summer. Even Karau would be preferable to this.

Ironically enough, all this had happened because he had accepted that battered tea-pot of rattling-marbles from Karau.

It was late in the afternoon of the day following Charlotte's death. The police had come, questioned everyone and gone. No one, thank God, had mentioned the fairies. Charlotte had been taken away. The howl of the police ambulance still sounded in McFarland's ears. He shook his head, put the empty glass on the bookcase and stared for a long time out the window toward the greenhouse. Damned if he was going to go out and mix up again with those little devils.

Jimmy Steele came downstairs from his mother's room. Freida had been sobbing loudly all day and Howard Steele had finally given up trying to comfort her and had gone to the factory.

Jimmy wandered hesitantly into the library. He sat on the edge of a chair near the hall, staring at McFarland.

"Hello, Jimmy," McFarland said. "Your mother feeling any better?"

Jimmy shook his head. He had a terrific lump in his throat that wouldn't go away. He'd liked Charlotte a lot. She was a pretty lady. After a while he left his chair and came to the window. He grasped one of McFarland's fingers in his hand, and stared out the window.

"Art?"

"Uhuh?"

"You think the green men might have killed Charlotte?"

McFarland looked startled, then remembered that Jimmy had been at-

tacked in the same manner.

He stared down at the youngster.

"Jimmy, tell me about them, will you?"

Jimmy's jaw set in a determined line, then he looked up, and his expression softened. Tears were in his eyes.

"I promised not to tell, Art, but they didn't play fair. They shot arrows at me."

"But why?"

Jimmy shuddered.

"I said I was going to tell, and they told me I shouldn't."

"Tell what, Jimmy?"

"About me learning—teaching them our language."

McFarland sat down in the davenport and motioned for the boy to sit beside him.

"Look, son," he said sternly, "you start at the beginning and tell me everything you know about the green fairies."

JIMMY took a deep breath.

"They came into my room one night. They kept coming back again, and I said I wouldn't tell about them because they were fun to have around. They started pointing at the words in my Robin Hood book. They wanted to learn how to talk like us."

He hesitated, obviously very impressed by what had happened.

"The leader—, he called himself Thorna—is awful smart. He learned how to talk like me right away. Then one night he said I mustn't tell. That he was going to conquer the whole world. I was scared. I said I was going to tell you, and then they all shot arrows at me. It didn't hurt much, Art, but I'm glad you came when you did."

He added the last part bravely, then subsided into silence.

McFarland sat very still for a long

time. Then he left the boy and went outside into the garden.

"I'm damned," he kept repeating softly to himself.

He circled the greenhouse slowly.

There was only one entrance other than the door itself. Near the rear of the building he found a small pane of broken glass. He went to the tool shed and found another window-pane. Returning, he placed it securely over the hole. He found a padlock in the shed, slipped it into the door of the greenhouse and locked it. He didn't know that Thorna and his warriors had already escaped from the Palace of Glass. Ben, the red-haired gardener was leaning on a rake near the corner of the house. McFarland approached him.

"Stay out of the greenhouse from now on, Ben," he said.

The gardener started to protest.

"But the plants, sir. They need attention daily."

"Never mind, Ben," McFarland said, then added a little lamely, "I'm starting some tropical stuff in there next spring. I want the junk we have now to die out."

He turned abruptly and walked away. Ben removed his cap slowly and scratched his head. Then he started to rake again. Orders, even screwy ones, were orders.

WHILE McFarland was occupied with his tour of the grounds, Sylvia Clark had made a decision. One thing convinced her that the plant men had not murdered Charlotte Grande. They had attacked both Jimmy and Art and the wounds were only slight. Charlotte had been cut deeply. Deeply enough to die before anyone reached her door.

At the moment, Sylvia was busy packing a large, corrugated box. It was a sturdy affair, suitable for air-express. She had called for an express pick-up. She placed the last *plasta* inside the

box, folded the cover down and sealed it with tape. On the outer side she wrote directions that would insure the box delivered to J. Manning Clark in the Matto Grosso district in Brazil.

Thorna had assured her that his people could live in a suspended state inside the *plastas*. He also promised that when the *plastas* became very warm and moisture penetrated the packing, he would give orders that their prison be broken open. After that, Sylvia told him, it would be but a short distance to the steamy jungle, and a suitable home.

Sylvia was almost sure that she was doing the right thing. She had found a bloody ice-pick pushed between the sheet and mattress of Charlotte's bed, and she didn't want to tell anyone until she had an idea who might have used it.

Whoever had used the pick on Charlotte knew about the fairies, and had tried to imitate their attack.

She was almost sure that no one but Jimmy, Art and herself knew about those little green men. It couldn't be one of them.

She hoped that she wasn't mistaken. That she wasn't sending a box full of murderers to South America.

CHAPTER XII

Signature of Murder

J. MANNING CLARK returned from Brazil two weeks after Sylvia mailed him the package containing the plant men. He flew home without letting them know that he was coming. His entrance to Art McFarland's home was abrupt and without fanfare, as were all of J. Manning's movements.

As usual, since Charlotte Grande's

death, the Steeles, McFarland and Sylvia were collected in the library, talking about practically any subject but the one that interested them most.

J. Manning, huge, gray old warrior that he was, opened the door and walked calmly in on the scene.

"Well? Well? Don't stand there gaping at me!"

When the excitement had died down slightly, Sylvia had kissed her father until he was actually blushing, and the others had gripped his hand, J. M. found a place at McFarland's side and sat down. Sylvia sat close to him.

"I suppose you've all been wondering what I was doing there in that hell-hole of a jungle?"

J. Manning was well past fifty with a face that was toughened by the wind and sun of strange lands.

"I was about ready to take a fast trip to the Matto Grosso," McFarland said. "Why didn't you send more letters?"

J. Manning chuckled.

"I was my own chief cook and bottlewasher," he said, then added gravely, *And* mailman. I was stranded a hundred miles up that little jungle stream we discovered three years ago. The last native to go out took that note of mine to Rio and it was relayed to the Consulate. After that, I wandered around by myself, trying to figure out a way to convert strangler vines into plastic."

"Strangler?" Sylvia asked.

J. Manning smiled.

"There's a new vine I happened across that thrives in the deeper sections of the Matto Grosso. The natives won't go near it. That's why I had to do my own exploring. When cut and reduced to a pulp, it makes one of the hardest plastics I've ever seen."

"But—why the name strangler?"

"Because the strangler vine is well-named," J. Manning answered. "No, I'm afraid that we'll never market the strangler for our use. It choked three of my boys before we could get out of it. They didn't care much about a repeat performance.

Silence met his last words, then a long sigh from Freida Steele.

"I guess we *all* have had our share of *death*," she said in a resigned voice.

J. Manning was at once alert.

"Someone here . . . ?"

He turned toward McFarland.

"Charlotte Grande," McFarland said grimly. "Murdered upstairs two weeks ago. The police have given a verdict of murder by person or persons unknown. That seems to be the end of their imagination."

To everyone's surprise, J. Manning didn't seem greatly disturbed.

"Grande, huh?" he frowned. "I understand from Rudolph that they were divorced only a short time ago."

"Then you've seen Hall?" McFarland's eyes were on Sylvia. Hers widened slightly, waiting for her father's reply.

"Just before I took the Clipper from Rio," J. Manning said. "He's going to keep the office open down there, although there's little use for it now."

SYLVIA halted on the stairs. Something in her father's voice almost frightened her. J. Manning caught up with her.

"I'd like to talk to you before we turn in, if I may?"

She put her arm in his.

"I've been waiting a long time to talk with you again." She smiled up at him. "By the way, Dad, I sent a large package to you a couple of weeks ago. Did you get it?"

J. Manning shook his head.

"Must be on a river-boat headed

into the jungle," he said. "Sending me more junk I'd have to toss to the fish?"

She was glad the package hadn't reached her father. Now Thorna, the plant man, would realize the great change in climate, and her plan would succeed. She wondered what would have happened if J. Manning had opened a box of *plastas*, and tried to find out what they contained.

"Sylvia?"

They reached the top of the stairs and walked down the long hall toward the room McFarland always reserved for his guest of honor.

"Uh huh?"

"You know you acted damn funny when I was talking about Rudolph and Charlotte?"

Her head jerked upright.

"But, Dad! What makes you say that?"

"I don't know. That's what I want you to tell me."

She let go of his arm.

"There was something about Charlotte's murder that I didn't tell the others," she confessed. "Now that you're home, I think you're the one to know."

He turned toward her, eyes suddenly grim.

"The police are the ones to know, if it's important," he said sternly.

"Dad—please! I was afraid the blame might point toward someone else. Toward someone I like a great deal."

She saw the flash of anger in his eyes.

"Hall can take care of himself," he said.

"It wasn't . . ."

She hesitated.

Her father went on.

"I happen to know that you had a case on Hall once," he said. "Mooned over him for months. Are you sure

you ever quite got over it?"

She nodded.

"I've always thought he was attractive, but now I know it was in a weak sort of way that couldn't last for long. He's the last man in the world I'd try to protect."

THEY reached the door of Sylvia's room and she led him inside. She moved swiftly to the bed, leaned over the drawer in the night stand and fumbled under a box of stationery. She drew out a long, brown envelope and passed it to J. Manning.

"I found it in Charlotte's bed the night she was murdered. You can do what you wish with it."

Her father opened the envelope and carefully removed the ice pick. The point was covered with the brown of dried blood.

"Whom are you trying to protect?"

Sylvia sank down slowly on the bed, refusing to look up at him.

"None of your business," she said softly. "You can do what you want with the pick. I've done my duty."

He was insistent.

"But you *are* trying to help someone?"

She nodded ever so slightly, then buried her face in her hands and started to cry.

J. Manning strode quickly across the room to the open fireplace. Art McFarland had started a fire earlier in the evening and the blaze was warm and bright.

"Darned if I'm going to get my nose into this mess," he said, and tossed the ice-pick into the flames.

Sylvia stared at him. The fire reflected against her hair until it was like flaming, molten gold. There were tears in her eyes, and the smile she gave her father was filled with gratitude.

CHAPTER XIII

Jimmy Takes a Trip

JIMMY STEELE had thought it rather exciting living in Art McFarland's house. Since the green fairies had attacked him, and Charlotte had died, Jimmy was pretty careful. For a time he kept the window of his room closed and made sure the door was always locked.

But six months had passed since Charlotte died and the green fairies went away. Six months in which the murder had been forgotten and Jimmy had stopped worrying about the fairies.

Jimmy's father, Art, and J. Manning Clark were awfully worried, Jimmy thought. Tonight they had had a long conference in Art's library. Sylvia had been there too, but she had taken Jimmy to a movie and they had missed most of the conference.

It had something to do with business, and Jimmy heard Art say that Plastics, Inc. was on its last legs, whatever that meant. Art said Plastics, Inc. would have to get more raw materials, and get them fast.

Jimmy got a big kick out of the show, but Sylvia didn't. Sylvia tried to pretend, but she was crying when the lights went on. Sylvia had been crying a lot since Charlotte died. And Sylvia had fought with Art. It seemed as though Sylvia was always fighting with Art.

One night in the hall he heard Art say:

"Why don't you go to South America if Hall is the man you're interested in?"

"Perhaps I will," Sylvia snapped back, and that night she cried more than ever. Jimmy heard her when he walked past her bedroom door.

Dad was unhappy, and so were the others.

Jimmy pressed his lids together very tightly trying to remember what the first little green fairy looked like when it came into his room. He had just managed to reconstruct the picture in his mind when there was a sound from the window and his eyes popped open.

Jimmy!"

He had forgotten to lock the window. It was wide open. Standing on the carpet, halfway between the window and the bed, was one of Jimmy's green fairies.

But he wasn't a fairy any more! He had grown to man size!

Jimmy knew who it was.

"Thorna!" he cried.

Thorna, a perfect image of his former tiny self, was as big as Art. Thorna placed a finger to his lips.

"Shhhhh! You will awaken the others."

Jimmy was sitting on the edge of the bed. He remembered how Thorna had given the command to fire arrows at him. How Thorna had left him for dead.

"You get outa here and stay out."

Jimmy pointed toward the window.

Thorna advanced toward the bed.

"I came to help, not harm, you."

"You get out!" Jimmy shouted.

Thorna sprang forward quickly, his arms sweeping around the boy. One hand gagged Jimmy so he couldn't shout. With his heart pounding madly, Jimmy tried to kick and fight his way loose. It was useless. Thorna reached the window, sprang lightly out and fluttered to the ground.

In spite of the terrible fear that filled Jimmy Steele, he was impressed by the large spheroid that rested on the grass at the rear of the house. It was like a huge, black basketball, much higher than a man. There was a door on one side of it, and the door was open.

A warrior, one of the once tiny plant men, closed the door tightly after Thorna stepped inside with the boy in his arms.

"We are ready?"

"We are ready," Thorna answered. "We have the boy. Another phase is complete."

Silently the *plasta* drifted into the dark sky. It whirled far upward, drifting south.

CHAPTER XIV

McFarland Guesses

ART MCFARLAND, from his place near the garden wall, saw the *plasta* of the plant men rise from the garden and float away into the night. McFarland had come in late from the office, driven directly to the garage, and entered the garden from the alley.

He stood transfixed as the *plasta* drifted swiftly out of sight. No sound betrayed the kidnaping. McFarland watched what took place without connecting it with the tiny plant men of a few weeks back.

He went swiftly toward the house. A gradual feeling of horror came over him. That vague, uneasy feeling that something terribly wrong had happened. The *plasta* might have been his imagination. Certainly balloons didn't float out of his garden regularly.

On impulse, he went up to Jimmy's room and knocked. No answer. He tried the door but it was locked.

"Jimmy?"

He rattled the knob vigorously.

"Jimmy!"

He shouted this time, but with no results.

McFarland was growing angry. Jimmy Steele had been in trouble a short time before . . .

"Good lord!"

It dawned on him at that instant that what he had seen in the garden was a huge replica of the tiny spheroids that floated into the kitchen the night he was attacked by the plant men. McFarland put his shoulder against the door this time. He hit it hard two or three times before the wood splintered and the lock broke. He fell into the room, caught his balance and stood there, staring at the empty bed.

His mind was trying to tell him something that he refused to believe.

"They couldn't . . ."

But Jimmy Steele was gone. The bed had been slept in. McFarland crossed the room. The window was open. On the carpet under the window was a small fragment of something green. He picked it up. The fragment was paper-thin and green as a leaf.

HE RAN to the study, picked up the phone and dialed Sylvia Clark.

"Yes?"

"Sylvia, this is Art. Listen, can you and your father come over right away?"

Sylvia's voice was pleased and a little excited.

"But, Art, it's after midnight."

He tried to speak evenly. To prevent a betrayal of his thoughts.

"Jimmy's gone. I think we should decide what to do before we tell his mother."

"Jimmy—gone?" Sylvia was puzzled. "But Art—where?"

"I'm damned if I know," McFarland said wearily. "I wouldn't dare say this to anyone but you. I think some giant brother of the plant men must have kidnaped him."

Sylvia Clark's voice answered him clearly, filled with a fear that he

couldn't understand:

"Don't call anyone else until I get there, Art. I'll have Dad drive me over at once."

WHEN Sylvia finished her story, J. Manning Clark took a deep breath. He looked at McFarland.

"It seems that my daughter has succeeded in transplanting a race of people that can be dangerous," he said. "For the time being, we'll have to tell Jimmy's folks that he's missing. I don't think we ought to let the entire story out. I'll pack at once for another trip to the Matto Grosso."

"Dad," Sylvia said miserably, I didn't know it would end like this. The poor little fellow didn't stand a chance here. I thought by shipping them to the Matto Grosso, I would be helping them. I didn't know they'd betray us like this."

"But why Jimmy?" McFarland asked suddenly. "Why did they take him?"

J. Manning looked thoughtful.

"Jimmy was their first contact with our race and language," he said. "As little as I know of these plant men, I'd hazard a guess that they are multiplying speedily, as well as growing much larger. Jimmy's language, being the simple words of a boy, would be easy to understand. They will probably use him as a teacher."

"And you say the package was addressed to your father?" McFarland asked.

Sylvia nodded.

"Art,—" she began.

"I know," he said. Don't worry about Jimmy. If they are using him as a teacher, they won't harm him. It's our job to get to the Matto Grosso before they decide he is useless to them."

"Our job?" J. Manning demanded.

"I've been waiting for a crack at the Matto Grosso," McFarland said grimly, "and at the plant men. It won't take many hours to get there by plane. Meanwhile, you'll have to tell Howard Steele a story that will stick until we can find Jimmy. *I hope we can.*"

Sylvia was more worried than she would confess.

"Art," she said suddenly. "Freida will be hard to handle. She'll remember Charlotte and the way she died. She'll make the police start their search for a murderer all over again."

She couldn't go on. Couldn't say that she and McFarland were the only ones who knew of the plant men. That McFarland might have used the ice-pick to kill Charlotte Grande.

"Let the police search the Matto Grosso, then," McFarland said grimly. "They'll find their murderer there, where we are going to find Jimmy Steele."

Sylvia was silent. Perhaps they would find Charlotte's murderer in the Matto Grosso. She only hoped that it wasn't McFarland who went to Charlotte's room that night armed with the weapon she and her father had destroyed.

CHAPTER XV

Kingdom of Thorna

AT THE headwaters of the tiny jungle stream up which J. Manning Clark had struggled, the men who first sprang from tiny seeds found their home.

A great clearing had been hacked from the jungle. Around the edge of this open space, a constant patrol of splendidly built warriors was maintained. They carried long bows of tough, green fiber. They flourished

heavy knives, hacking at the jungle when it grew close enough to threaten their town.

In the clearing itself, which was well over two miles in circumference, the plant men had built their homes. Each was the shape of a *plasta*, but many times larger. In each home a half dozen warriors lived. In the center of the town, rising high above the homes, a great *plasta* sat like a huge ball. Its top rose three hundred feet above the ground. Warriors patrolled the flattened top, their eyes constantly turned toward the jungle.

The huge *plasta* was the ruling palace from which Thorna directed their activities.

At present, the palace *plasta* was a busy place. Warriors came and left hurriedly through the doors that were ranged about its base. Within the palace *plasta* was a series of galleries, built around a center platform. On this platform Thorna sat on a comfortable, leaf-covered couch. Opposite him were ten other couches, for sub-rulers of the plant man kingdom.

Before Thorna stood a small, defiant-looking boy. His clothing was torn and very dirty. His eyes were dry but his cheeks were streaked with forgotten tears. His lips were pressed tightly together and his fists were clenched at his sides.

"I don't care if you do hurt me," he shouted. "I won't teach anyone anything about our people. You'll have to find out for yourselves how tough we are."

Thorna smiled. He was letting the boy tire himself out. There was plenty of time. Thorna stared upward at the warriors ranged around the galleries. They were all waiting, staring downward at the small figure on the platform.

"We will not harm those close to

you," Thorna said. "We wish only to know with what weapons your people fight. Where their wealth comes from, and how it is used. In short, how the plant people can overcome them."

Jimmy Steele couldn't help it. He started to cry again.

"Why did you bring *me* here? I don't know anything. There are a lot of men who can tell you everything."

Thorna shook his head.

"Our first contact was with you. We understand your thoughts better than we do the more advanced types of your race."

He turned to the gallery, raising his voice so that all might hear.

"You understand my reason for giving the young earthman time? We cannot do as we wish without some delay. For thousands of years the seeds of our people lay frozen in ice. Before the death-of-ice swept down upon us, we *owned* this earth. Now, others have taken it away from us. We have now gained the size we needed so badly. With a little more knowledge we will be prepared to fight our battle to regain what is rightfully ours.

"We have been able to copy the *plastas* in which we were born and have constructed materials from almost every plant. Now, with what this child can tell, we will be fully prepared."

A MURMUR of approval arose from the warriors.

"The sub-leaders agree that we are ready for battle. We need only know the few places on earth where man's power is concentrated. Our war will be swift and terrible."

"My leader!"

Thorna stopped suddenly at the interruption and turned toward the plant man who had just approached him.

The man had rushed down from the galleries to the platform.

"Yes?"

"My leader," the sentry said again, and his voice was filled with excitement. "A number of our men approach from the stream of water. They carry another white man."

At once excited voices came from the gallery. Several warriors jumped from their gallery seats and winged their way swiftly to the doors.

Thorna scowled.

"See that he is brought here at once."

He turned toward Jimmy Steele.

It may be one of your friends," he said.

The man came through the door near the platform, squinted in the fading light and saw Jimmy and the plant leader in the dimness ahead of him.

"Mr. Hall!" Jimmy ran across the platform toward Rudolph Hall, then hesitated before him to draw back with fright. Hall's face was covered with a thick beard. His arms were pinned tightly behind him, his clothes badly torn. But the vines frightened Jimmy most. Vines about an inch thick that were holding Hall's arms. They wrapped tightly around his body, writhing and twisting like living things.

"Jimmy! For God's sake——." Hall pitched forward on the floor and lay still. Half a dozen plant men moved about him.

"Release him." It was Thorna, standing now, his eyes bright. "Perhaps he can help us."

Jimmy watched as the plant men ripped away the vines. One of the men kneeled and placed a cup of liquid to Hall's lips. He sputtered as the stuff ran into his mouth. His eyes opened and he sipped feebly. They hauled him to his feet. He tottered, then stag-

gered forward and put both hands on Jimmy's shoulders.

"Jimmy—tell them I'm not a spy. That I work for your father."

Jimmy, frightened, but still defiant, turned to Thorna.

"You let him go," he said fiercely.

"He's Mr. Hall. He doesn't care about your old war."

THORNA sat down once more on the leafy couch and drew Jimmy to his side.

He spoke directly to Hall.

"We intend to harm no one, for the present," he said, "We may ask you a few questions that will enable us to fight more intelligently in the coming war against you people."

Hall's jaw dropped with surprise, but a gleam of hope came into his eyes.

"War? against our people?" He stepped toward Thorna sinking down on his knees. "I'll answer questions. I'll help you. Just don't kill me. I'll tell you anything you want to know."

Thorna turned to the guards who had brought Hall from the jungle.

"Take the boy away," he said shortly. "I believe we should listen to this new guest. He sounds most interested in our plans."

Hall's eyes narrowed and a bitter smile lighted his face.

"I am," he said. "I can't think of a better place for me to be right now. Ask your questions, but first, promise me safety and a share of what you gain by such a war."

"All that in due time," Thorna promised. "And now, tell me of the cities—the number of people, the weapons that make up your present world."

Rudolph Hall stared around him at the vast galleries of green-winged warriors. Jimmy Steele had told him about the plant men that night before

Charlotte's death. Hall had also known about the package that Sylvia sent to South America.

He had come into the jungle, hoping against hope that the whole thing wasn't a fairy tale. Now his wildest hopes were realized.

CHAPTER XVI

The Plant Men Prepare

THORNA'S life thus far had been a constant pleasure. Ever since his first meeting with the girl, and her offer to help him, Thorna had gone forward to fresh victories.

The plant men had first broken from their box prison aboard a small river boat. Their *plastas* floated them into the dense jungle and they felt the strength of the terrific heat. Their bodies, like eager plants, had sucked in the hot, moist air, and they had grown swiftly. Now the fresh plants were producing seeds for thousands of new plant men that were to grow to full size in a few short weeks. The kingdom, all of it under Thorna's command, had grown until he felt they were ready to strike for freedom.

Only one thing marred Thorna's happiness. He wanted the girl. He was large enough to own her. She had been the one force that saved the plant men, and it was only right that she should be his queen.

Thorna didn't like Rudolph Hall. Hall, however, had proven very valuable.

"You people," Hall told him, "have a method of manufacturing plastics from fiber material, that has escaped us entirely. I've never seen plastics so hard and durable as those you use for your bows and other weapons. The houses you live in are a much better grade of plastic than even our top man-

ufacturers can produce."

Thorna was puzzled by that. His people had always made their possessions from the carefully ground dust of various plants and fibers. They had pressed out such molds as they wanted, then cured the products by a series of heat-and-water applications. He wasn't aware that, in doing this, the plant men were using methods that were far advanced. Hall planned to study the plant men's methods and use them to help himself.

Throughout the three week period, Hall taught the plant men what he knew of the people of the world. Jimmy Steele remained imprisoned in a deserted *plasta*. His food was brought to him, but other than that he might have been forgotten by the entire settlement.

The plant men filled their *plastas* with dozens of spears and extra plastic bows and arrows. The arrows were carefully dipped in poison which came from the root-brews stirred over hundreds of fires.

The jungle was full of the strange strangler vines. These vines were cut and carefully packed into empty *plastas* that would be towed to the various places of battle. The vines were almost alive, ready to creep toward any object around which they might wrap themselves. They would be valuable.

AS ARRANGEMENTS were completed, Hall became nervous. Here in the jungle, these people seemed all-powerful. Their ability to fly swiftly through the night and pounce down with the help of their strange weapons, made them seem a great, all conquering force.

Would they stand up under fire of modern weapons, once the earth became aware of them?

They were multiplying every day

until the jungle had become full of them. Each time a different group came to the palace for instructions, they returned to their own village to prepare for the coming war.

Hall estimated that thousands of warriors were ready. There were at least enough of them to swoop down in the night and paralyze the earth's greatest cities.

But the thought of power was going to Hall's head. He imagined himself standing at Thorna's side, dictating orders to the peoples of all nations. Perhaps if he worked wisely even Thorna might become second in command. It was a wonderful opportunity.

Hall failed to figure out one angle. What would happen if others of his own race were thrust suddenly into the lives of these plant men?

ART MCFARLAND hoped that J.

Manning and his daughter would keep their word and sit tight in the shack by the river, until he returned. They had been here for a week, searching very mile of the jungle for some trace of Jimmy Steele. McFarland shifted his rifle back to his right shoulder and pushed the bush-knife into his belt.

The vines that moved toward him from the limbs of nearby trees were strangers. After almost losing his neck to one of them, he'd known enough to stay clear of the rest.

It was almost night. He didn't want to be caught out after dark. The dangers even during the day were more than enough for one man.

He turned back toward where he thought the shack was located, and started to hack with the knife once more, working slowly forward. The sun was sinking and the red glow splashed like blood over green foliage. A toucan screamed wildly at the coming

night. Somewhere, stealthy footsteps followed behind him through the jungle.

McFarland stopped suddenly, a flash of pale-green catching his eye. He froze against a tree trunk, studying the spot where the movement had come from. There it was again, as though a living creature had moved at the edge of the underbrush. The trees were a bank of green, light and dark, interwoven into a mass of shadows.

Then he reached an open spot, and his heart started to pound unreasonably. Not fifteen yards away, silhouetted against the sun, stood a tall, green warrior. His flesh and clothing were both emerald. Pale, almost transparent wings fluttering against the warrior's back. He carried a long bow, strung loosely with an arrow.

Then he was gone, moving almost directly away from McFarland.

The American moved forward cautiously, following at a safe distance. With the coming darkness and the skillful blending of green, it was hard to follow the man.

Here in the Matto Grosso, the slightest movement was difficult, the smallest amount of work almost unbearable.

The ground was smoother now and the jungle opened into a vast field. The warrior was in the open. McFarland paused at the edge of the jungle, alert and worried.

For as far as the eye could see, the jungle had been cleared. Thousands of huge *platas* were scattered about the turf. He recognized them at once, remembering the one that had floated out of sight above his head the night Jimmy Steele disappeared.

Far away were other spheroids of a larger size. In the center of the mass was the largest *plasta* of all.

McFarland crouched in the semi-darkness and waited. His body was

hidden by a thick palm. He watched with narrowed eyes as the patrols of plant men passed his hiding place. The sun was almost gone now. McFarland had no doubt what his next move would be.

Jimmy Steele was in there somewhere, and it was McFarland's job to bring him out. The third guard passed. McFarland, crouching low, made sure the plant man was out of sight. This would be his best opportunity to enter the town. He moved forward on his hands and knees, picking out a *plasta* close to the edge of the clearing. He could hide in its shadows, working toward the center of the town.

As McFarland moved through the last undergrowth, he had no way of knowing that the strangler vines had been deliberately placed here for just such an intruder.

A thick, rope-like vine shot through the darkness and wrapped silently around his neck. His rifle fell from his hand and a choked cry escaped his lips. Struggling weakly, he sank to the ground. The vine grew taut, winding around and around him, tightening with each coil.

CHAPTER XVII

Queen Sylvia

"IT IS the man who attacked us in the Palace of Glass," Thorna bent over the silent man on the leafy couch. "Where was he found?"

He looked at the guard who waited at the door of the *plasta*.

"Near the jungle," the guard said. "He called out, and I saved him from the strangler vine. I brought him directly to your *plasta*."

Thorna nodded.

"Leave him and say nothing for the present. I will see that you are rewarded."

The guard left, closing the door of the *plasta* behind him. They were alone, the unconscious man on the couch and the leader of the plant men.

McFarland opened his eyes slowly, staring about in the darkness. A single, flickering light came from a candle-shaped stick that burned on the table. McFarland's hand moved to his neck, then came away slowly. There was thankfulness in his voice when he spoke.

"I guess I owe you a vote of thanks,"

Thorna shook his head.

"One of the guards brought you here," he said. "You were close to death. A strong herb medicine revived you quickly."

McFarland sat up. His head ached miserably.

"Why have you come here?" Thorna asked. He had remained standing since McFarland opened his eyes. His arms were crossed. His eyes were calm and attentive.

"For the boy," McFarland said. "We . . ." He stopped abruptly, thinking it better not to mention the others.

"We?" Thorna asked. "Then there are more of you?"

McFarland grinned suddenly.

"Why not," he asked. "The girl you saw that night, and her father. We guessed from her story that we'd find you here."

Thorna nodded. He looked very happy.

"The girl? Where is she?"

McFarland smiled.

"Where is the boy?"

Thorna became solemn.

"Is that the game we play?"

"I guess it is. I want the boy. Give him to me, and I'll be going."

Thorna's eyes narrowed.

"So that you may return to warn your people?"

"Warn them of what?" It was McFarland's turn to be surprised. Surely

these plant men didn't think they were powerful enough to harm the people of earth. "I'm sure no one will disturb you as long as you stay here in the jungle."

Thorna looked mysterious. He was feeling very proud of himself and his plans.

"But," he said softly, "we do not plan to remain here. We are going to invade. We are going to take back a world that belongs to us."

McFarland didn't know whether to laugh or to act impressed.

"For God's sake, man, who's been filling you with such ideas? You couldn't capture a city, much less win the entire world by a war. Do you realize what you're up against?"

"We have weapons—and an advisor," Thorna said bravely. Nevertheless, he was taken aback. "We cannot be easily frightened."

"But wait," McFarland begged. "At most, you might have seven or eight thousand against millions. Your bows, arrows, spears, anything I have seen, would be useless against our weapons. Can't you realize that civilization has advanced many centuries since you were last on earth?"

THORNA was badly worried now.

He remembered the huge homes, the complicated gadgets that he had seen when he was first born into this new world. Had their advisor, Hall, betrayed them?

"You are trying to frighten me," he said stubbornly. "To turn me against those I trust. The boy is necessary to us."

"It sounds as though you've been getting this fine spirit of war from the boy," McFarland said evenly. "You seem to have the facts that a boy of ten would know. Certainly no man with a normal brain would attempt such

a task as you suggest."

Thorna's cheeks flushed angrily. He turned on his heel and walked to the door.

McFarland watched him step outside. He started forward, trying to reach the door before it closed. In that brief instant, he saw Sylvia Clark and her father. They were being pushed across the grass, wedged between tall, green warriors. McFarland saw the look of fear on Sylvia's face, then the door slammed in his face.

He pulled it with all his strength, fighting to get out. It was useless. Once closed, the *plasta* was as solid and strong as two inches of steel. He gave up, crouching in the circular prison, wondering what would happen to the others before he was once more free from the *plasta*.

HE MIGHT not have worried had he known that an hour later, Sylvia Clark, puzzled and a little afraid, was seated on one of the thrones in the palace *plasta* of the plant men. Thorna, well-pleased with everything, sat near Sylvia. He was afraid that, though she had come willingly, she might manage to escape if the opportunity presented itself.

With the day of the great war approaching swiftly, Thorna was deeply puzzled and a little frightened about certain details. The man, McFarland, had said some things that would stand investigation.

Perhaps Hall *was* betraying them.

With his eyes on the girl, Thorna gripped his bow firmly in both hands and bent it across his knees. Hall entered the palace *plasta* and came up the steps to the thrones. He saw Sylvia, but he betrayed no emotion other than a quick widening of the eyes. The girl in turn, ignored him.

Hall turned his back to her and

started to address the gathering.

"Thus far, our plans are perfect," he shouted. "Today we will discuss . . ."

CHAPTER XVIII

Rifle of Justice

RUDOLPH HALL enjoyed his new role as teacher of the plant men. He had finally figured everything out neatly. He would not be with the plant men when they went to war against the other peoples of the world. He knew now that they couldn't win. Probably Thorna would be killed. When the plant men returned, weakened and unable to decide for themselves, Hall would step into a powerful position. He would harness them to the production of plastic slabs, see that the plastic sold at a good price in the States, and return home with a fortune.

That was going through his mind that afternoon when he climbed the steps to the platform in the center of the palace *plasta*. To see Sylvia sitting there calmly at Thorna's side, draped in regal robes of green, admired by the plant men, made Hall burn with jealousy. He refused to acknowledge her presence, launching immediately into the business at hand.

As Hall talked on and on, he knew nothing of the thoughts that were going through Thorna's mind. Thorna was making plans. Simple ones, to assure a safe future for his people.

A warrior was dispatched and returned with a detachment of guards. With the guards came McFarland and J. Manning Clark. Clark looked relieved as soon as he saw Sylvia safe at Thorna's side. Rudolph Hall had not seen the party enter the palace *plasta*. They came from behind him, mounting the steps to Thorna's side. Hall detected the undercurrent of excitement

in his audience. He turned half around, then stopped talking abruptly, his eyes on Art McFarland. His mouth remained open a little foolishly.

"Art?" he said. "How in . . .?"

McFarland turned to Thorna.

"I was told that I'd be allowed to talk?"

Thorna smiled and nodded his head.

"I have given your words much thought. I have made many decisions. I have also talked with your friend, J. Manning Clark. He is greatly impressed by our work with fibers."

"You're damned right I am," J. Manning said. "You know, Art, these boys know more about plastics than we do. They *like* the heat down here. We could make a fortune for them."

McFarland smiled uncertainly.

"I don't understand," he confessed. "We're prisoners, yet we talk business."

Thorna waved an arm toward Rudolph Hall. Hall had overlooked McFarland's cool refusal to speak to him. He stepped forward now, offering J. Manning his hand.

"Quite a settlement we've run across down here, Mr. Clark."

J. Manning Clark refused the proffered hand, and Hall let it fall to his side.

"*Quite* a settlement," Clark agreed dryly. "I guess you've been doing a little development work yourself?"

Hall shook his head.

"Just the ground work," he confessed. "I—that is—we should make a fortune."

THORNA stood up suddenly. Although his face still held a patient expression, his eyes were hard.

"Enough of this play with words," he said. "I was not sure what steps should be taken until I spoke this morning to the boy, Jimmy Steele. He has convinced me that you, McFarland,

told the truth."

Hall's face turned white.

"I—I don't think I understand?"

Thorna ignored him.

"The boy taught us everything we know of your language," Thorna said. "We thought that the people who had taken our world must be killed so that we might have it back. Now after listening to Hall, we realize that a large area of the globe has grown colder since we lived here.

"Before the death-of-ice, the world was warm. Now only a few places are hot enough for us to live in comfort.

"Hall told us we could conquer the people of the earth. That we could regain power with the weapons we have. I know that this is false. Perhaps it was his plan to make us do as *he* wished, after we lost our war.

"Hall had one great power. It saved him in his own country, but has betrayed him to us. The boy, Jimmy, is afraid of him. Jimmy told Hall of our race, and Hall killed his wife in such a manner that placed the blame on us."

Rudolph Hall sprang forward.

"That's a damned lie." His face was livid. "I wouldn't betray you."

A murmur of resentment arose.

"Deny that you told the boy you hated your wife," Thorna went on calmly. "Deny that you said if you couldn't have her, no one could. You frightened the boy until he refused to speak. You placed the entire blame on my people." Hall pivoted, facing them. His fists were clenched. His eyes were narrowed and ugly.

"Yes, if McFarland hadn't shown me what a fool my wife was, Charlotte would still be alive. Do you think I'd come to South America and leave her where she could throw herself at him?"

Thorna's face was carefully masked of any emotion.

"If you would betray us once, it

would be a simple matter to do so again," he said. "You say our weapons are powerful enough to face our enemies. I have a rifle which was brought here by McFarland. Arm yourself with bow and arrow and face me." He took the rifle from the hands of a waiting guard. "I know little of this weapon, but I will take that chance."

Another warrior came forward with bow and arrows. Hall took them mechanically, his eyes darting about, seeking some avenue of escape. He knew Thorna would kill him with a single bullet if he tried to run. He moved slowly down the steps and into the main chamber of the palace *plasta*. He stumbled toward the main entrance. In a moment he would have to turn and accept Thorna's challenge. Perspiration moistened his hands and the bow became a heavy, useless thing.

Then a wild fear overtook him. He started to run blindly, weaving from side to side, trying to reach the outer door.

"Jimmy! Be careful!" It was McFarland—shouting a warning.

Hall suddenly realized that, his moment of good fortune had come. Jimmy Steele had entered the door and was standing before him. The boy was too startled to run and Hall grabbed him. Holding the boy in front of him he turned toward the platform.

They were all standing. McFarland held the rifle.

"Let go of the boy, Hall," McFarland said coolly.

Jimmy was kicking frantically. Hall shook him until he went limp.

"I'm backing out that door, Art," Hall snarled. "If you shoot, you'll hit the boy."

He started to retreat slowly, hoping they would stay where they were until he was in the open.

"We'll get you anyway," J. Manning

said. "You haven't got a chance."

"Go to hell!" Hall whispered through his teeth. He was outside now. He knew that they had already rushed down from the throne platform. There were dozens of doors around the base of the palace *plasta*. He'd have to run for it.

He dropped Jimmy, turned and ran desperately toward the jungle. If he could reach the heavy underbrush before McFarland could get outside?

A few more feet . . .

"Crack!"

Even though he had expected it, a look of surprise spread over Hall's face. He went down, clutching at his shoulder.

He rolled over slowly and came to his feet. He moved forward, crouching low, and reached the first line of bushes. He crawled in among them quickly, feeling sure that they'd never find him now.

A long, twisting vine coiled, lashed out, and wrapped tightly around his arms and shoulders. The curious, toughened tip caught Hall's neck and started traveling around the soft flesh. Hall's mouth opened slowly as he gasped for breath. His tongue, black and shapeless, began to protrude from his mouth.

CHAPTER XIX

Jungle Empire

A HUGE half-circle of green men stood in the open compound before the palace *plasta* of Thorna. A leafy canopy had been placed where it protected Thorna's guests.

J. Manning Clark and Thorna were seated on one of the couches, discussing business.

"You can stand this damned weather," J. Manning said, wiping perspira-

tion from his forehead. "You produce the sheets of plastic and deliver them at the river. I'll do the rest, and see that you receive your pay in equipment you can use."

Thorna's eyes moved lovingly toward the rifle in Art McFarland's hand.

"Weapons?" he asked hopefully.

J. Manning grinned.

"Enough for hunting," he said. "You boys are pretty smart. I don't want to get a war started."

Thorna shook his head.

"There will be no war," he promised.

"We are satisfied here, and it is my understanding that no one will molest us. You have proven that you are a master race, and we will not be unwary enough to trouble you."

As he spoke, his eyes were on McFarland. The warriors were learning with great interest what the white man's weapon could do. It was, so far as McFarland was concerned, a good-will party. Scare hell out of them and they wouldn't get ideas of using those bows and arrows.

He watched while ten warriors released arrow after arrow, practically pinning a wild boar to the ground before the animal was dead. Then a second beast was released.

It rushed headlong across the open field. McFarland took careful aim and placed a bullet between the animal's eyes. It tipped over, rolled a few feet and lay still.

"Lesson one," McFarland said with a grin, "is to impress the savage, right from the start."

Queen Sylvia, standing proudly at his side, brushed the hair from her eyes and smiled up at him.

"Jimmy says there's only one marksman who's better than you are, Art?"

Her eyes were sparkling.

McFarland turned in mock anger to Jimmy Steele.

"Well, Jimmy," he challenged, "bring on your man. Who is he?"

"Cupid," Jimmy answered with a laugh of triumph. "Cupid hit you and Sylvia right in the heart, the very first shot."

McFarland's grin faded for a moment, and a tender smile took its place. He turned to the girl.

"I guess he's right, at least so far as I'm concerned."

Queen Sylvia forgot for the moment that several hundred of her subjects were staring at her. She slipped into McFarland's arms.

When she tried to get away it was too late. McFarland had a grip on her that was stronger than the strangler vines. He kissed her again, then looked up at the dozens of twinkling eyes that stared at them both. He turned toward J. Manning Clark, who had suddenly forgotten business and was also smiling.

McFarland looked about him at the vast settlement of plant men.

"I sure started something," he said, "with that tea-pot full of rattling-marbles."

THE END

SCIENTIFIC RIDDLES

By R. H. Wang

Here are some of the things science must conquer before many miracles we dream of can become real

THERE can be no arguing the fact that science has accomplished much these last few decades. However, there is most of the journey still ahead of us. Very little of what there is to know is really known. Most of our present knowledge is in too fragmentary a state and is, therefore, not really seen in its true light. Physicists specialize in physics and in a like manner biologists specialize only in biology.

Actually, in order to get the maximum results, we must integrate all the fields of science. We must make use of all the tools and equipment of the various branches of science, and attempt to correlate our findings in each particular field of research with the findings in the other fields, so as to give each fact its fullest meaning.

Let us think about some of the important problems which science has thus far failed to adequately solve.

What is Life? Probably none of you reading this article have the slightest idea of how to answer a question of this sort. Well, don't feel too badly about it, for as far as I know there is no mortal who could really answer this question. Of course, many scientists could give you a list of the various characteristics which are common to all living forms and foreign to inanimate objects. For example, a scientist might tell you that only living things can reproduce. In almost all cases this is true, for we have no evidence that any stone was ever able to reproduce its kind, in the sense

that plants or animals reproduce their kind.

A scientist would probably list growth as another symptom of life. This aspect of life is more debatable. For example, while very few people would be inclined to call a salt crystal a living object, it is a common laboratory experience that a salt crystal dropped into a saturated solution produces a phenomenon closely resembling growth. The crystal begins to add salt molecules onto its surface and grows in size. Also, if you were to break up the crystal into small fragments, then each small fragment would continue to add salt molecules and build itself up in the same sense as the fragments of a worm can rebuild itself.

Have you ever watched a one-celled amoeba under a microscope? All scientists will agree that the amoeba is very much alive and exhibits all the symptoms of life. If you are fortunate enough, you may get a chance to see the amoeba attack and consume his food.

The process is relatively a simple one. The amoeba has a very unstable form. It is capable of taking any shape it wishes by merely flowing out a portion of its protoplasm. When the amoeba spots its food, it makes its way toward the food and then surrounds it by bulging huge protoplasmic arms in all directions about the victim. Once the food is surrounded, it is taken directly into the amoeba proper and digested. All food that is unpalatable to the amoeba is ejected. This would tend to illustrate the discriminatory abili-

ties so characteristic of life.

However, what about a drop of chloroform? This also can absorb a bit of hardened shellac, as if it were food, and at the same time eject a piece of glass that may have been present in the shellac. Must we now say that a drop of chloroform, since it can distinguish between glass and shellac, is a living thing?

It is very interesting to note the fact that many explosives are as sensitive to external stimulation as one might expect of a living plant or animal.

Nitrogen iodide will respond with explosive violence to the slightest disturbances. Bang a screen door and nitrogen iodide will explode as rapidly as it takes to execute a simple reflex action in man. Touch nitrogen iodide with a feather and it explodes.

Keeping these facts in mind we may ask ourselves many questions. For instance, "What connection does there exist between an explosive such as nitro-glycerine and the living unit of all living matter—the cell?" This may sound like a very silly question, indeed.

However, it did not sound silly to one of the greatest of all American surgeons—Dr. George Crile. Nor did it sound silly to his staff of researchers, for they spent many years of intensive study on problems of this sort—the net result of all the co-ordinated efforts being what appears to me a very plausible radio-electric interpretation of life.

Let us examine some of the important facts and inferences brought forth by this radio-electric interpretation of life.

In the first place, as already suggested, there is a close resemblance between the nitro-explosives and the basic substance of all life—namely protoplasm. Both are carbon compounds which have become nitrated.

To show you what a difference a nitration of a carbon compound may cause with respect to the chemical properties of this compound, let us consider the nitration of glycerine. Glycerine by itself is very stable. You could do almost anything to it and no explosion would occur. You could heat it, pound it, give it an electric shock and still nothing would happen. However, let an unstable and sensitive nitrogen compound become chemically united with it and—*brother, duck*.

Glycerine in its nitrated form is easily exploded by jarring, by electrical shock, by radiant energy from the sun. Nitro-glycerine is not alone in this respect; protoplasm may also be detonated by sound, light and other stimulating factors. Furthermore, both protoplasm and the nitro-explosives give off CO_2 and some form of nitrogen during an explosion. The Radio-electric theory would then attempt to bridge life and form of organic nitration.

Let us now consider another interesting problem of science. The problem of power. Do you realize that if all the sunlight that falls on the earth's surface in one minute could be utilized, we would not need to worry about heat or power for almost a year. Think of what it would mean not to be

dependent upon the plants of past ages for heat and power. Not to have to send men into the dark caverns of hell to dig up the remains of a billion year old life.

Farnas, in his book, entitled, *The Next Hundred Years*, describes some interesting attempts at solving the power problem. For example, there was actually an attempt to harness the power of the sun by means of a solar boiler. The plan was very simple. The sun's rays are reflected upon a perfect parabolic mirror and made to focus onto a specially designed boiler. The purpose is to generate steam and therefore power. The plan is a possible one and has been done.

However, what is to keep the sun from disappearing behind a cloud? To compensate for the time that the sun might spend behind a cloud, an energy storage reserve would have to be erected. This is very inefficient and hard to carry out. Therefore, while this approach to the problem of tapping the sun for its energy is possible, it must be considered impractical.

After the discovery of the photo-electric cell, many great engineering minds began to speculate. "Is this the clue we've been waiting for? Have we at last discovered a means of converting the 1/10 horsepower the sun showers every square foot of our blessed earth with into the electrical energy so vital to our form of civilization?" Yes, the plan seemed simple enough. All that was needed to be done was to erect photo-electric farms—acres of land covered with photo-electric cells.

Now when the sunlight hits the light sensitive compound in the cell, an electron is emitted and so we have a flow of current. This is all very good, if the right type of cell could be found. A cell that produces current flow measured in terms of amperes, and not in terms of milli-amperes.

Perhaps some day a right type of cell may be developed. At present we have none suitable for so great a task as sunlight-tapping. A method similar to the one which employs the photo-electric cell, uses the thermocouple as a means of generating current.

The thermocouple is based upon the following principle. If two different metals are welded together and the soldered junction heated, a feeble electric current flows when the cold ends of the two wires are joined.

Again we encounter the same difficulty. A perfectly sound idea when it comes to running a toy train, but impractical for a project involving a production of power for the entire world.

If we could only learn the secret of trapping solar energy from the plants, then we would no longer need to be dependent upon them. We could pass our sunlight into a solution of carbon dioxide and water, and thru the aid of a proper catalyst, cause the carbon dioxide and water to synthesize formaldehyde. The formation of formaldehyde would succeed in tying up a good portion of our solar energy. All that we would then need to do, would be to find a suitable set-up for oxidizing the formaldehyde.

In other words, a method for reversing the previous process—so as to break up the formaldehyde into the carbon-dioxide and water that united to form it.

The purpose of this reverse process would be to get back the energy of the sunlight that we trapped and stored away in each molecule of formaldehyde. The process could go on and on—for the carbon dioxide, the water, and the catalyst used

to build up the formaldehyde would be liberated when we oxidized the formaldehyde to obtain its stored energy.

Our catalyst would not be used up in reaction, since catalysts never become incorporated into the products of a reaction. All that keeps us from realizing a dream of this sort is a suitable catalyst, something on the order of chlorophyll which the plants employ to solve the problem.

ALL BUT FLYING ELEPHANTS

By EARL HERBERT

DO YOU think your pet dog is especially clever? Does he sit up and beg? Does he play dead? Does he walk on his hind legs? Well, what would you say if you were told that a few other, so-called less-clever animals, can put your dog to shame with their tricks?

First, there are the dancing bears. As graceful as a Pavlova, these animals waltz and twirl to music.

More striking is the case of the famous German horse, Hans. Hans, a five-year-old horse, could answer questions and solve problems. By means of a letter system on a numbered chart, this animal could give his replies if there was a letter "p" for example, in the fourth vertical column and the third horizontal row of the chart, four taps with the left hoof and three with the right meant "p." In solving numerical problems, taps with the left hoof meant tens and those with the right meant units. Thus 53 was represented by five taps with the left and three taps with the right. With these systems of communication, Hans was shown to possess considerable ability in solving problems and in answering questions ordinarily requiring considerable intelligence.

Another horse, Mohammed, of the famous Elberfeld horses, was reputed to extract square and cube roots besides performing the simpler arithmetic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

How did these animals learn these things? Here, the answer is much less spectacular and "magical" than the descriptions of the particular feats themselves.

Bears are taught to dance by being placed upon hot grills while music is playing. Still clever?

Hans, the famous German horse, was examined

by a psychologist named Pfungst, who apparently solved the "spectacular mystery." He showed that the horse responded to involuntary "cues" or signals given by his trainer, such as slight, approving movements of the head, changes in facial expression, and the like. Thus, it was observed, if the answer to a problem were 68, the horse would tap rapidly with his left hoof until some small (and probably unintentional) signal from his trainer warned him to stop and begin with the other hoof. The trainer, hardly realizing the fact himself, was himself the source of all the necessary cues.

Further investigation of Mohammed and the Elberfeld horses turned up more information. For one thing, these horses learned their tricks too quickly. They could not have had any real understanding of the problem, then, scientists are led to believe. They took no longer to solve hard problems than easy ones—sometimes they would begin tapping without even glancing at the problem set up before them! The kind of errors made, too, were not those of an intelligent computer—common mistakes were reversals of figures such as 36 for 63, or errors of one unit such as 26 for 25. It is easily seen that such errors occur when the animal confuses temporarily the left and right hoof or when it fails to stop tapping quite soon enough.

In spite of this deflating evidence, however, such stunts do show that animals are extremely clever in picking up and interpreting very slight cues and signals not readily observed by onlookers.

The next time you hear a circus "barker" extol the intellectual accomplishments of the animals in his side show, you can smile with a tongue in your cheek—Science is behind you!

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Don't let the cost of this war pile up a huge mountain of debt that will rob your children of a chance to be happy and to live the life that is rightfully theirs!

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READER'S PAGE

ABOUT QUARTERLIES

Sirs:

I have been reading *FANTASTIC* and *AMAZING* for over a year now, and I just got through reading my first Quarterly. Now that I know you publish them, I want to get every preceding one. Will you kindly give me the dates, and also on the future issues?

JAMES CAROLA,
2412 Bathgate Ave.,
Bronx, N. Y.

Back issues of some of the quarterlies can be purchased by addressing our circulation department. But supplies are very limited, and are disappearing fast. As for the future issues, we have one more issue of each quarterly prepared, and these will be the last, due to paper shortages, until after the war, or restrictions are lifted. We sent you a list of copies now available.—Ed.

SHE CAN SEE THE DIFFERENCE

Sirs:

I have read with a great deal of interest and amazement, *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES* and *AMAZING STORIES* for a year. I realize I am a new fan, but I must say that the books are great. I have gone to every second hand story in L.A. to pick up more copies of older issues. And I can see the difference in each issue. Each one gets better and better. The only thing you could do to improve them is have more illustrations per story.

The best story of both magazines was "The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years" by Wilcox, and second and almost first, "Doorway To Hell."

BETTY KING,
504 W. 33 Street,
Los Angeles, 7, Cal.

Sorry your letter was so long we had to cut it, but thanks a million for all the compliments.—Ed.

SHE "BOILS"

Sirs:

I purchased your August issue this evening and have read several stories and the letters. It made me boil when I read R. J. Gruebner's letter generally "knocking" FA, inspiring me to write this letter. Frankly—he's all wet! I was never much of a literary critic, nor do I like stories that are technical. When I sit down to read a story I want one that is amusing and entertaining. The more they deal with the supernatural, the better. Bloch's Lefty Feep stories are always swell. "Citadel of Hate" in the June issue was exceptionally good. I

started buying FA last year and was so pleased that I have been buying it ever since. I think it's tops! You probably never would have heard from me if I hadn't been so angry with R. J. Gruebner! He doesn't like the mag, he doesn't have to buy it. There are thousands to his one who love it.

(UNSIGNED)

We published this letter to make a point, although the writer asked us not to. We try to get our writers to write the kind of stories this writer likes, because we believe the vast majority of readers like them "amusing, entertaining, not too technical." We might deviate at times from this policy, but at all times the story must be interesting from an entertainment value.—Ed.

A FAN FOREVER!

Sirs:

The other day I bought one of your quarterly issues of F. A. I had never read any of that type of story before, but after reading William P. McGivern's "Enchanted Bookshelf" I became an F. A. fan for life. That story was by far the best short story I've ever read.

Along the opposite side, "Pegasus Plays Priorities" was terrible. More by McGivern, please. An F. A. fan forever.

BOB NEWTON,
San Marino, Calif.

We agree about "Enchanted Bookshelf" but we regret exceedingly that we have very few more McGivern manuscripts left to publish. But he'll be back after the war!—Ed.

SCIENCE FICTION?

Sirs:

I started reading your magazine several years ago, and have never missed a copy since. You started as a science fiction magazine, and if it is that now, then I'm a monkey's uncle. I have the August issue and I am ready to throw it away. I, and I imagine many others, started reading *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES* because it was a science fiction magazine. I'm ready to stop reading it if it doesn't improve.

ALFRED M. STRICKLAND,
(No address given)

*Have you seen our companion magazine, *AMAZING STORIES*, our science fiction magazine? *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES* is our fantasy magazine, and we published it to answer the definite demand for a companion for *AMAZING*, to cover the field of fantasy as well as science.—Ed.*

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101 SEX QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
By Dr. David H. Keller
IN PLAIN WORDS

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"MARTIANS WITH RED EYES"

Sirs:

In the September issue I noted a letter by a Walter Terrill who seemed to dislike all embellishments, as "People with three eyes—red, amber, and green." If all stories of interplanetary travel were cut out your magazine would be exceedingly stale. As to beings on other planets Mr. Terrill should realize that just because we have been provided with a brain and size that all things should be judged by our standards. . . . Such changes as would have occurred on the outer planets would have happened in all probability with enough time to allow for any life there to become adapted to it. Life there might even be microscopic. How about getting size-shrinkers?

I doubt that you will print this letter as I never have had one of mine printed but I'm taking the chance.

ARTHUR B. LATHAM JR.,
Thornton, Calif.

Actually, we know so little about the other planets that it seems our authors have license to interpret them as they see fit in their imaginations. Certainly it is this right that makes many of our stories fascinating. Imagination is a wonderful thing! We've had size-shrinkers before, and we'll have them again.—Ed.

HE WOULD DO BATTLE!

Sirs:

I'm glad to hear that FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is bi-monthly. Now maybe there will be a few stories worth reading. I was disappointed in the Luvium story. Nazis again. Ye gods, why does the war always creep into science-fiction? I'd like nothing better than to see a nice, twenty-thousand word novel of the future in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, preferably by one of the following authors, who are listed according to their merit as I see it: Bond, Kuttner, Cross, Coblenz, Bloch, Duclos, Farley, Wellman, Binder, Cummings and Swain. It seems some of the above are too busy in military occupations to bother writing, but you mentioned several months ago that you will have lost another fine writer when your present supply of Swain's stories are gone. Since, then, not another story by Swain has appeared. If you have any more, let's have 'em. Also anything by Duncan Farnsworth, P. F. Costello, John York Cabot, Clark South.

Getting back to the Sept. issue, the best story was "Devil's Planet." The McCauley drawing was the best. In case anyone is interested in disagreeing with me, as most fans usually are, I like the following artists best. First, McCauley; second, Finlay, and Julian; third, St. John, Rod Ruth, Wesso, Paul, Lawrence, Schomburg, Kramer and Fuqua.

If there is anyone reading this letter who thinks I'm crazy because I read FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, let him (or her) write me a letter telling me why. Like so many other fans, I became interested in science-fiction thru Buck Rogers in the comics, then thru "Man From Hell" by Polton Cross in the

old FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. Beyond a doubt, readers of this type of literature are twenty-five per cent more intelligent than the average person; they wouldn't understand it if they weren't. They must be open-minded, imaginative, the kind who don't grin at the SF mags at the newsstand, the kind who don't stare at the man walking down the street in winter wearing a long black overcoat and white duck pants. He's probably a SF fan.

And Mr. Dan Willhite: I fail to see any comparison between a rocket ship taking off and a car going up a hill. There is no air drag on a rocket ship. If I'm wrong, Dear Ed., stop me, but it seems to me that the process of rocket flight involves something about free-wheeling in space. I have been lead to believe that once a ship zips beyond the atmospheric blanket of Earth, it continues to its destination at the same speed, therefore, a high escape velocity is necessary. Unless, like Mr. Walter Terrill (who, in my opinion, is a mill-stone on the progress of SF) we all believe space-travel will necessarily take a man's lifetime. That's sheer rot. So Mercury's surface temperature melts lead. So Venus has an atmosphere of Methane. Why, from those unproven facts which are probably true, do you draw the conclusion that it is unlikely that any of the planets are populated by any kind of beings? In those two words is your downfall. Is there some definite proof that no kind of life can exist in a Methane atmosphere? No. As Weinbaum mentioned in his "Martian Odyssey" with his silicon-constituted stone animals, why isn't it possible for anything ever conceived in the wildest imagination to have a life, which, while not, perhaps, fitted to our ideas of life, does live as far as itself is concerned. Maybe the chair I'm sitting on is alive, or the pencil on my desk, or my drawing board or typewriter. Maybe when midnight comes they all jump up and raise hell. Come, come, Mr. Terrill, if we left out everything you want us to, what would we have left but stories like "Carbon Copy Killer"? Oh, I like Blade's story, too. It was most excellent. But to go thru science-fiction with nothing but stories "Close enough to home . . . etc." would prove mighty dull, since SF is supposed to be escape literature. Which brings me to my closing brickbat. Why don't you drop the first word of the title FANTASTIC ADVENTURES? It would describe the magazine perfectly then. In other words, FA is nothing but plain stories with a veneer of fantasy that is not a bit satisfying.

Oh, and, Editor, if there are some kind of hypatomics capable of increasing a rocket ship's speed after it passes Heavyside Layer, according to Bond, please inform me. If there is a possibility of such a thing ever being perfected. The first space projectile will probably be nothing but a big bullet. If I'm in it, then I'll be well repaid for suffering thru the years with RAP's brain-children.

R. J. GRUEBNER,
2910 N. Major Ave.,
Chicago, Ill.

Actually, Mr. Gruebner, the war creeps into only about ten per cent of our stories. As for Mr. Swain, we ran all of his stories. Perhaps you missed the one we ran in *Amazing* under a pen name? We can't tell you what that pen name was, but we know you would recognise it if we did! We wouldn't say our readers are "twenty-five per cent more intelligent" than most people. They are more imaginative, that's all. You, and the fans, are mistaking one quality for another. Certainly Einstein is more intelligent than most of us, but he is not a fantasy fan. Also, we don't believe fans do walk down the streets in winter with white duck pants. Are you kidding us? As for your rocket science, rockets function best in a vacuum! And the air impedes them until they get out of it. Speed can be built up after leaving the atmosphere, contrary to your belief. We won't have to inform you of any "hypatomics." Ordinary rockets (or even a roman candle) will do what you erroneously believe cannot be done. No present-day rocket expert even considers making the first space ship a projectile! And you wouldn't want to be in it if it was!—Ed.

IDEAS—AND WHY WE CAN'T

Sirs: How's this for an idea? Publish an AMAZING STORIES omnibus and a FA omnibus of the best stories from each two books of the best stories by readers' choice. Have a vote on the stories such as "Where Is Roger Davis?" or "War of Human Cats." I believe many of your readers would like to have a chance of having their

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DID you ever see a deep sea monster? Most people scoff at tales of white faced fishermen or watchers along the seacoast who swear to have seen enormous serpents swimming in the distance. They attribute these constantly recurring stories to optical illusions created by twilight and the movement of the water. Occasionally, some large fish is washed up on shore and the mystery of the sea monster seen in those waters is solved.

But an event occurred in the waters off the Florida coast that lends credence to the possibility of a type of enormous fish that lives deep in the ocean and whose size dwarfs that of the whale. One day some fishermen were out in their boat when a fin cut the water and they decided to have some fun by harpooning the "sbark." Instantly the water foamed into activity and then followed the wildest thirty-nine hour ride those fishermen ever had. For the enormous fish they had speared was heading out to sea with all the power of a wounded giant. The men had to bail out their small boat constantly and several times they escaped death from the monster's thrashing tail by inches. After a day and a half of this exciting contest, the weary men were able to tow the tired monster to Knight's Key and there tie it to the trestle work, but with a flick of its tail the mammoth smashed the pilings into bits. Then a thirty-ton yacht was pressed into service, but the thrashing tail disabled it. Finally, a tugboat was used which succeeded in towing the giant to the beach at Miami, Florida.

Examination revealed that it was not a whale, for it breathed like a fish. It was forty-five feet long and weighed 30,000 pounds. Its tail from tip to tip was ten feet. It had several thousand teeth and its hide was three inches thick. Before its capture it had swallowed another fish weighing slightly less than a ton!

But the most surprising revelation was that this monstrosity was only a baby! Its backbone was of a cartilaginous nature—a condition full grown animals outgrow as their backbone becomes a true bone. Thus speculation as to the size of the adult of its species is awesome. That it was a deep sea fish was evidenced by the size of its eye—no larger than a silver dollar. A larger eye would be ruptured by the great pressure at the bottom of the ocean. Also, the fact that the pupils did not dilate would indicate that the creature lived at least 1500 or more feet below the surface, where little light penetrates. Probably some earthquake below the sea drove the fish to the surface where the difference in the water pressure burst its bladder, thus making it impossible for the monster to return to its own level. And it is likely that others of the same species, perhaps twice as large, have been seen by popeyed human observers who understandingly might pass on the tale of block long sea serpents to a jeering world.

favorite stories bound in book form for their library.

WILLIS SEME,
5444 Hill St.,
Maple Hts., Ohio.

This is a good idea, and we may do it—but we just haven't the paper. Perhaps, after the war is over. . . . You'll notice we've already cut down our page content, and abandoned our monthly schedule in an effort to conserve paper.—Ed.

A SOUND OPINION

Sirs:

I'll be forty-five in January (surprise! a woman who tells her age!) and this is the first "fan" letter I have ever written! Due to much illness in my life, I have read a great many mag. stories as well as books. It has come to me with some shock, that, tho I seldom miss the "readers' letters" in magazines, and have often felt a strong impulse to have my say, I have only shouted mentally.

The letters often amuse me, often disgust me. Due to the almost unlimited range of taste in story type and subject matter, and due to the enormous difference in individual mental development and understanding, how can any one reader say categorically that any well written story "stinks" or that it is "lousy"?

It is true, I have often been left utterly cold by some stories, while these same stories are exceedingly well written, have an excellent plot, even a definite and well handled objective. These stories, I have always felt, were, to me, lousy, because I, personally, did not care for that type, subject matter, or characters or else they were too technical for me.

So many writers of complaints seem to be unhappy if they do not enjoy every story in the mag. That's too much to ask for 25c per mo. After all, they get a book full of stories each month, for 25c, which, had they paid exclusively, would have cost them several thousands of dollars.

If the mag is to interest thousands of readers, it has to contain several kinds of stories. If I know people, you can't find thousands who all like exactly the same kind of stories. Some are bound not to like some of the stories some of the time. What in the name of the planet Mars do these crabbies want for 25c.

MARJORIE TAYLOR,
2802 W. 8th St.,
Los Angeles, Calif.

We think the great majority of our readers realize this truth, Miss Taylor. And we don't print every letter we get. Hundreds of them are full of praise, which would embarrass us if we had to publish it. Would look like we want to toot our own horn all the time. Actually, we print more derogatory letters than the actual percentage of this kind we receive—simply to avoid this little feeling of modest embarrassment. We appreciate letters like yours more than you know.—Ed.

OUR ABSENT WRITERS

Sirs:

As a reader of every FANTASTIC ADVENTURES mag. from 1937-40 inclusive I should be gratified if you would inform me whether Eando Binder (the writers of Adam Link and most of my favorites) Ed Earl Repp, and another (2nd choice) who evades my memory, are in the fighting forces. The first *Amazing* Stf I looked at in 3 years seems to be in poor form. Although I have never written to a mag. before, this condition prompts me to suggest the cause of the dilemma, the absence of that trio who measured up, by their plots, to Weinbaum or anyone. The quality of the entire mag. will suffer if a substitution isn't effected for these masters of SF. The replacements ought to write in the same way and with similar plots and style.

NORMAN RABBINER,
91 E. 208th St.,
New York, N. Y.

Neither Binder nor Repp are in the armed forces. Binder is working exclusively on comic books, and Repp still works for us occasionally. But your suggestion that new writers imitate their plots and styles—well, don't mention it while those new writers are around! Or while the old ones are around!—Ed.

OUR AUTHORS (AND WE) THANK YOU

Sirs:

Although I have only been reading your mag. for a year now I have already decided it to be the best on the market. I wish to congratulate the many authors on the fine job they are doing and also the artists on their front and back covers. Please have more stories like "The Lost Warship." Well, I guess this is all I have to say so I'll be signing off.

RICHARD J. BARKER,
834 Genesee Street,
Rochester, N. Y.

We certainly will have more of the kind of story you like. In fact, Williams has a few on tap that will hit you squarely!—Ed.

O'BRIEN'S IN THE AIR FORCE

Sirs:

I have been reading your magazine for a very short time. To be exact three months. I discovered it last June. I have always liked the type of stories you put in your magazine.

I wrote to give you my views on the September issue. Pretty near every story in this one is very good. Here's the way I rate them.

"Lunar Vengeance" took first place. That Ayre guy sure can dish it out. "War Worker 17" and "The Devil's Planet" came in for second. Please more of O'Brien if you don't mind. Next was "The Powerful Pipsqueak." "Madcap of Mars" followed up. Too much modern slang though. "When Darkness Came." No comment. "Luvium, The



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Invincible City." Like all McKenzie stories not
so hot. Those are my views.

JOHN L. COOK,
(No address given.)

Thanks for your list. As for O'Brien, he's flying
for Uncle Sam. We have one more story awaiting
publication by O'Brien. It will appear soon.—Ed.

COMING UP!

Sirs:

I am having hysterics!!!!

I have just finished "Warrior of the Dawn." Mr.
Browne should finish it too! Write a sequel—
Write another chapter—Write something! But
don't leave the story with such an atrocious end-
ing.

I have read several such stories lately and my
imagination is running on rather morbid lines. I
can just picture Tharn lying tangled at the bot-
tom of a cliff—and Dylara taking poison because
he's dead—and Jotan stabbing himself because
she's dead—and Alurna weeping her heart out be-
cause of him and then jumping out of a palace
window. Lovely, isn't it?

I think that men like Mr. Browne should be
put away permanently. Would you please give
Mr. Browne my regards—the few that I have left
—and tell the editor that from now on if he
doesn't get stories with good endings I'll have
a nervous breakdown.

With a frantic appeal, with a very frantic ap-
peal, in fact, for sequel.

KENNETH PETTIT,
2909 Hillegass Ave.,
Berkeley, Calif.

Since writing "Warrior of the Dawn," Howard
Browne has become one of our editorial staff, and
perhaps the reason the sequel has been so delayed
is because we keep him busy putting good endings
on other author's stories! But we assure you a
grand sequel is on the way!—Ed.

"MYSTERY" NOT A MYSTERY

Sirs:

After avidly devouring your September issue
and before passing it on to other GI science-
fiction fans I reread "Mystery of the Megaliths,"
by L. Taylor Hansen. It has occurred to me that
Mr. Hansen could have solved the mystery quite
simply if he was not fully as ultra-conservative
as some scientific savants he speaks of. He needed
to mention but one name:

Atlantis!

I have a hunch that his fingers itched to write
that name into his article but he dared not.
Otherwise his article was one of the best on the
subject I have ever read altho it exasperated me
to have him omit such an obvious conclusion.
There has been much nonsense written about
Atlantis and other mythical sunken lands in this
and other pseudo-scientific pulps. For some time
any story with an Atlantis locale was sure fire.
They even had German subs nesting among the
ancient pyramids beneath the sea!

But every point brought out so brilliantly by Mr. Hansen points to an unknown, centrally located highly civilized culture from which that culture emanated and the megalith builders migrated in all directions around 9 or 10 thousand B.C. The Egyptian culture was greatest at its zenith and many Egyptologists now place that zenith around 8000 B.C. The ruins at Tiahuanaco, Peru, are acknowledged to be of that early date, the invasion of Europe by the "sea peoples" (Cromagnon, Magdalenian, Azilian, etc.) took place around that period.

Call it what you will: Atlantis, Antillia, Brasil, Ys, Avalon, Mu, Lemuria place it where you will in the Atlantic or Pacific, but the fact remains that this sunken land holds the secret of the mystery of the megaliths.

Perhaps only dead and drowned Japs and Nazis will ever know the answer—and they won't tell.

But if some day some natural upheaval or some super-ocean drag net should bring to the surface relics of the sunken motherland I am quite confident some smug, complacent plus-ultra-conservative would glance at it, shake his head knowingly and date it around 2000 B.C.

"Some Phoenician ship was wrecked," he would probably prattle, "and lost it here."

Ultra-conservatism! Phooey! What anthropology and archeology needs is more Schliemanns, Breasteds and LePlongesons and fewer mossbacks and fainthearts of the Elliott-Smith vintage. Then we would quickly learn that man did not run around with a club on his shoulder one day and build perfectly oriented pyramids the next. Then Plato's story would be history, a tremendous blank in our knowledge of the civilized genesis of man would become crystal clear and Atlantis would assume the tremendously important place which is rightfully hers in the continuity of life on earth: the antediluvian motherland of mankind.

Lt. JAMES A. WHITE,
Military Secret,
U. S. A.

And how! Lt. White, it makes us feel good to have such comment on our *Scientific Mysteries*. Mr. Hansen has been doing them for years, and he'll continue to do them for years. Eventually, this series will comprise the most complete compilation of this ancient science ever gathered together—and we know that Mr. Taylor contemplates making his work available to posterity by publishing them in book form. But until this happens, our sister magazine, *Amazing Stories*, will give them to you hot off the typewriter.—Ed.

THE PYRAMIDS AND THE MOON

Sirs:

I'm sorry to see that you have taken out Correspondence Corner from your mag. and also cutting down monthly issues. If you can't have *Amazing Stories* and *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES* monthly then at least have *Amazing* one month and *FANTASTIC* the next and so, so that we readers

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can at least enjoy reading your mags. without waiting two months for the next issues.

"When the Darkness Came" and "Lunar Vengeance" were both in the groove. "War Worker 17" was swell, but what a name for a swell story and heroine, a better name for it would have been "A Trip to a New World," or such. In the story of "Lunar Vengeance" it tells of how the pyramids and sphinx were built by the Selenites. Of course that's only in the story of "Lunar Vengeance." But may I suggest a way of how I think the pyramids and sphinx were built; of course that's only my idea of how it was built. As you know the moon has altogether a different force of gravity, where on earth a man can jump an average of 4 or 5 feet while on the moon an average man can jump about 15 or 20 feet. Since the moon is a lot younger than the earth, could it be that the earth once had the same source of gravity that the moon has now in its present day, so the blocks were a lot lighter and it wouldn't take such a great deal of men to lift it in its place, and when they got higher they used pulleys of some type. Of course I may be wrong but I'm not a genius like Einstein. Please give me your description of how it might have been built.

Pvt. ANTHONY G. LOFASO,
Military Secret,
U. S. A.

At the present time, we alternate Amazing Stories and FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. Thus you get one magazine each month. Mammoth Detective, our third magazine, is issued quarterly. Why not fill the gap with that magazine? Your favorite writers also appear in that book. The effect of gravity is a result of mass, not age, of a world. Thus, the gravity of the moon was always less than that of earth. Thus far, no explanation other than that of human labor, long and tedious, is available to account for the pyramids. Each stone block was rolled up a long incline which was later removed, by use of logs and levers and thousands of harnessed slaves.—Ed.

WE READ IT!

Sirs:

Your reply to Flight Officer Beck's letter (Sept. '43) shows an incredible lack of familiarity with one of science-fiction's best known novels.

May I recommend that you read Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" as soon as possible—and share with Lt. Beck—my husband—myself—and thousands of other Huxley admirers the significance of "pneumatic"?

Ford! What is the world coming to?

LOIS DELLNER,
1933 Lawn Ave.,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Okay, Mrs. Dellner. Actually we read the book, but we were just acting coy! We are amazed to discover how many more people read Huxley's book! We got letters . . . well, we got letters! We publish yours as representative. And we won't worry about the term "pneumatic" being misunderstood from now on.—Ed.

A. MERRITT'S STORIES

Sirs:

As I was about to write you, and request that A. Merritt's "The Moon Pool" be printed as a reprint in your splendid magazine, I happened to pick up the late paper. To my sorrow I read of A. Merritt's death. I am sure that the readers of *Amazing Stories* and *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES* feel the same way that I do about the death of such an extraordinary science fiction author. I hope that it will be possible that some of his stories can be reprinted in AS and FA.

RAY O'CONNOR JR.,
541 Marcy Ave.,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

We have a policy at present of sticking to original fiction. Perhaps after the war. Or perhaps some of Mr. Merritt's works not published in our magazine to date. We are inquiring.—Ed.

ANTHONY GILMORE

Sirs:

Have been a steady reader of your "Quarterly" reissues of both *FANTASTIC* and *Amazing Stories*.

Some time ago read a story which made a lasting impression, I've forgotten the title, but it centered around a character called either "Dr. Q" or the "Unknown Q." I believe the title was something along this line.

I recall reading other of this author's work. He features a "Captain Brand" as his lead. At any rate the story I read last built up this "Dr. Q" to such an extent that at the story's ending as it did, I expected further episodes of continued activity in later issues of your magazines.

Is this "Dr. Q" going to be left hanging in midair after the terrific build-up from the author? Or can we hope of further adventures, continued from that point? Incidentally who was the author and what issue of what mag. ran that story?

Anxiously awaiting the October issue of *Amazing Stories* to try my hand at the contest to write a story around the illustration.

WM. A. TENSFELD,
509—21st Street,
Union City, N. J.

The story was "The Return of Hawk Carse" and it was authored by Anthony Gilmore. More of the stories are in the process of being written, but like all other things, the war has halted work for a time. Amazing Stories ran the story in July, 1942. Others of the series appeared years ago in another magazine.—Ed.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Sirs:

The heading of the Discussions column states that controversy is encouraged, so here goes.

I don't agree with Raymond Washington's letter in the September issue. He says: "In any average group found anywhere in any town the trend is toward stupidity. The majority are stupid." Cute thing to say, eh what?

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In addition, he seems to want straight science and nothing else.

On the other hand, Walter Terrill wants *no* space travel, *no* invasions or wars, *no* unusual people, *no* supermachines, and *no* anything else that has been the basis for some of the best S-F yarns of all time.

Now maybe I'm wrong, but it seems to me that science and entertainment could be equally mixed in a happy medium. It has been proved many times that a story can be entertaining as well as scientific. In my opinion, too much sheer fantasy grows morbid. Fantasy should be used as an additional element, to increase the interest and suspense of a story.

Summing up, I sincerely believe that *Amazing Stories* and *FANTASTIC ADVENTURES* could be greatly improved by these suggestions:

1. *More Science*, instead of either 90 per cent fantasy or 90 per cent entertainment as is usually the case.
2. *Less gore, guns, and gangsters.*
3. *More interplanetary stories.* This is a matter of opinion. More of Thornton Ayre, however, might do wonders.
4. *Less Kindergartenish plots.*
5. *Better Artwork.* Maybe a little Paul, Finlay, Bok, or Leydenfrost once in a while, or am I too hopeful?
6. *A Longer Discussions Column.*
7. *Better Front Covers.*
8. *Trimmed Edges* (Heh! Heh!)

JOE KENNEDY,
84 Baker Ave.,
Dover, N. J.

We agree with some of your points, especially item 4 and item 6. As for item 6, take a look at this column!—Ed.

YERXA SUFFERS HEART ATTACK Sirs:

Your magazine for October is wonderful. All the stories with one exception—are so cleverly written that the reader thrills with the wonder of being taken into a weird, fantastic world. And for that delightful, delicious fear inspiring thrill, we buy your magazine and will continue to do so.

But why do you persist in inflicting upon us the mediocrity of that fellow Leroy Yerxa? His stories, and especially "Warrior Maids of Libya"—are flat and ring false like a leaden half-dollar. Reading him (and it takes much faith in your judgment Mr. Editor—to go to the end) one is bored—bored and saddened. He has nothing—so far at least. Perhaps—if you have faith in Yerxa literary ability (and you must be a judge)—if you rejected all that immature, badly written insincere stuff, he might try really hard and perhaps after 60 or 75 rewrites give us something worth while. But I think that you are doing an injustice—more, a great harm—to the magazine, to yourself as an editor, to the reader, and to the author, in publishing stories like "Warrior Maids of Libya."

GEO. W. HALL,
28 W. 6th St.,
Sioux Falls, So. Dak.

When Leroy Yerza read this letter, he promptly went down to the lake and tried to drown himself. But he had a heart attack, which saved his life. Now he doesn't know what to do. Poor guy. But really, Mr. Hall, is he that bad?—Ed.

MEATY LETTERS

Sirs:

First of all, you've asked for meaty letters—not simple, childish lists of rating. And that is what I'm going to try to give you. Let's discuss your ed's note to Mr. Terrill, and for that matter—Mr. T. himself; and some of the things he implies. Terrill states that he cares not for vastness in his stories—he simply wants ordinary things dressed up—revamped—or shall I say "rehacked"?—to make them "fantasies." You answer—no less—that he is perfectly right. And then you go on to mention some of the authors who write the stuff he desires. I disagree. In fact, your list is mildly ridiculous, to say the least. Don Wilcox, who avidly has to his credit such tales as "The Earth Stealers," "The Lost Race Comes Back," "Eagle Man," "The Voyage That Lasted Six Hundred Years," etc., according to you is nothing but a dresser-up of every day occurrences and who rehacks them into cheap fantasies. Nonsense, ed., nonsense.

Now, about Mr. Terrill himself. I won't go into detail except to say that if he likes the type tales he says he does, he obviously shouldn't be reading your magazines. Certain contemporaries of yours ought to furnish him with the type of reading enjoyment (?)—I hope I'm not too caustic—he is seeking.

Now, on to your answer to RAYM. That, too, was mildly ridiculous. Not only is it unfair—but it is even an injustice when you say the inner circle of fans seeks self-glorification only. I'll admit that we do want some fun from our work in fandom—that we do want to enjoy ourselves. Yet, *organized fandom* (the word should be spoken with reverence so please use italics) strives endlessly, and sometimes it almost seems hopelessly, for the betterment of scientification. Some day, when we are understood, we may achieve something. But, Mr. Editor of American Stiction, we can get nowhere with you openly denouncing the majority of O.F.

Before I conclude this letter—which incidentally will be short enough to include as is—I think it fair to give my definitions of certain words that I have been currently using in my letters. Remember, these are my definitions—and are meant for the words only pertaining to scientification.

SCOPE is a word which I use continually. It pertains to vastness—universal appeal in s-f. To galaxy-tales—to inter-atom battles, to odysseys across a new frontier—to anything great, and vast, and different.

ORGANIZED FANDOM is not necessarily the group that indulges in arguments, and senseless meetings. It is more or less, the group behind this

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bogus affair of noise makers. Or the noise makers themselves, so to speak, "After dark."

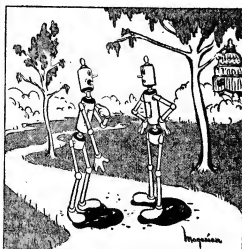
REHACKED fantasy, as I've obviously said is nothing more or less than dressed up detective or cowboy. Example is "Sheriff of Thorium Gulch" sometime back.

DISCUSSIONS (hah!) are not lists presented by kids or oldsters in their dotage—but are sound, helpful, horrible, annoying (since this is that last, I'll have to enter it as a condition), and thoroughly constructive.

Incidentally, the constructive part of this letter, in case you have not realized it as such—is the fact that I want better letters, as ever—more scope, and now you know what that is; and more novels.

MILT LESSER,
 2302 Avenue O,
 Brooklyn, N. Y.

Don Wilcox writes with such conviction that his stories can stem from any fantasy basis, but the point is, he can make even an everyday fact absorbingly interesting, and credible no matter how far he carries it into fantasy. As for denouncing anybody, we certainly don't. We enter these discussions as one of the discussers, not as that distant, frozen personage known as an "editor." And as one of you, we have a right to slam into the discussion with all the heartiness our readers use—and after all each one of you has said many times that's what you like about this magazine's reader's column! So when we disagree, we disagree—we don't denounce. Also, there has been a flood of criticism of our policy of cutting letters. Okay, from now on, if a letter is obnoxious (yes, we get as many crank letters as any other organization—including your congressmen!) we will omit it entirely. And we'll only trim redundancies from the letters we publish. As for our request for better letters, we started a flood, and we learned that our Reader's Page is one of the best features we have! The answer is obvious! —Ed.



"The government offered me a job today in the army . . . shrapnell!"

YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN

(Concluded from page 125)

ious voices. Offers and more offers, double, triple, any amount you'll take.

"Keep our account," Mellow was howling. "I'll give you enough money for a five-year network show."

Shelton, jumping up and down.

"I'm still your boss. A half hour of that Winchell stuff and we'll all be rich."

Randon, fading into the background. Another flash-bulb went off and Reese realized he had been kissing Sharon.

He reached into his pocket and drew out the almost empty bottle that had contained the truth serum. He gulped, found a drop in the bottom and turned to the crowd.

"I'll take all offers," he said. "On the condition that Bob Langly will handle the controls on every broadcast that I make."

He turned to Sharon, speaking to her and the others at the same time.

"And that Sharon Mellow will become one of the long list of truth-telling Reese's."

Sharon's eyes twinkled.

"I had to chase you a long time before you caught me," she said. "But anyone who says the things you did about my father and spreads the truth around so that people take it and like it, ought to make a partner for life."

"And I can keep right on saying what I want to? No prepared commercials? No more screwball advertising?" Reese asked.

A chorus of approval went up.

"Good," he said. "Then it's a deal. I'm going to tear my own grandmother apart if I don't agree with her. I got a hunch we said the right things the other night, Langly."

Langly was grinning happily.

"You can say that again," he said.

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WARRIORS OF OTHER WORLDS

By MORRIS J. STEELE

Mercury, closest of all the planets to the sun, is a world of eternal flame, on one side, and eternal cold on the other. Its people are born fighters.

(See Back Cover)

THE closest planet to the sun is tiny Mercury, no larger than Earth's moon, and having a period of rotation on its axis comparable to its rotation around the sun. For this reason, it constantly presents the same surface to the sun, and therefore, the same surface to the cold of outer, lightless and heatless space.

Thus, on the sunward side of Mercury we find conditions not only of eternal desert, but of actually "boiling" sands. Here the sun's rays are so intense that the sands of the desert become molten, and seas of molten glass heave sluggishly under the slight "rocking" motion of the planet as it hurtles around the sun like a stone around a child's head when the string that holds it is shortened. It is literally a "hell" wherein no living thing can exist.

On the spaceward side of the little world, no sunlight ever falls, except that reflected from Earth and Venus, both of which appear almost as large as moons, and intensely brilliant. However, this light brings very little heat, and the desolate ice-clad landscape remains eternally white and unchanging except for the almost constant fall of snow. This forms glaciers which creep toward the sunward side, melt, change to water vapor, and return to the spaceward side as cloud, to again be precipitated as snow.

The only portion of the planet that can endure as a habitat of any kind of life is the perpetual twilight zone that surrounds the world at the zone where the sun is always just below the horizon. It is here that we find the inhabitants of Mercury waging a constant struggle for existence against natural conditions which are undreamed of on Earth.

Here we have blazing heat, so intense as to melt rock, on one side, and a few miles to the other side, a region of eternal glaciers. In between a stormy area of flood, hissing steam, raging winds, and dust storms. This is the area where Mercury's only living creatures exist.

It is presupposed that any living beings in such a ferocious habitat must be, first of all, extremely hardy and savage in themselves, but also, possessed of a reproductive ability in direct ratio to the perils which surround them, so as to insure their survival.

Taking their savage nature first, we find that the warrior of Mercury is a female, hardly distinguishable from the male, who must be protected. She is a powerful, agile brute, able to

withstand extreme heat, even direct flame, and also able to combat intense cold. Clothing is both unnecessary, and impractical, since none but asbestos garments would withstand the sometimes necessary ventures into hot areas. A blast of live steam would have an effect on the tough skin of the Mercurian.

If Earthmen were to land on Mercury, they would be faced by these warriors, who would leap on them with whips tipped with radium, a plentiful element on Mercury. Only radium could cause the burns to a heat-impervious enemy.

Our armament against them must necessarily be something different than the dreadful flame-thrower we have seen in use in our war today. Such a weapon would be no weapon at all to these creatures. And in order to prevent the remarkably active Mercurian warrior from killing us even after she had been "killed" due to the fact that his body would be hard to reduce to immovability, we would use cold, but such intense cold as she had never known, that of liquid air, shot in breakable pellets which would freeze her body instantly where it struck.

The Mercurian is amazingly fertile, laying her eggs in the hot sands to incubate, and after hatching, returning at intervals to feed her brood. It is necessary that she feed as many at once as possible because little time remains from the constant struggle for existence against the elements and against rival tribes who would seek to steal her young, or her "lebensraum" which is at a premium on this world of many barriers to life.

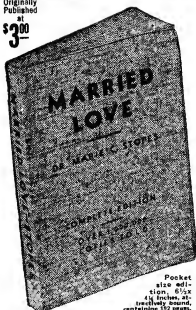
The male of Mercury is also a warrior, but he remains the last line of defense because of his importance to the existence of the tribe. He, however, can fight more savagely than the female when cornered, because he is smaller, more heavily armored, so to speak, against the elements.

Both male and female warriors possess great power in their numerous tentacles, which could crush a man in an instant if he fell into their grasp. In fact, the Mercurian tactic is to close with the enemy at the first possible moment and crush him to death, cracking the armor of the skin so that either flame or cold can enter to do its damage.

The skin of the Mercurian is probably more inorganic substance, such as asbestos, than it is of anything biological or fleshy.

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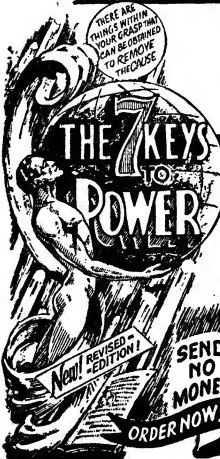
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